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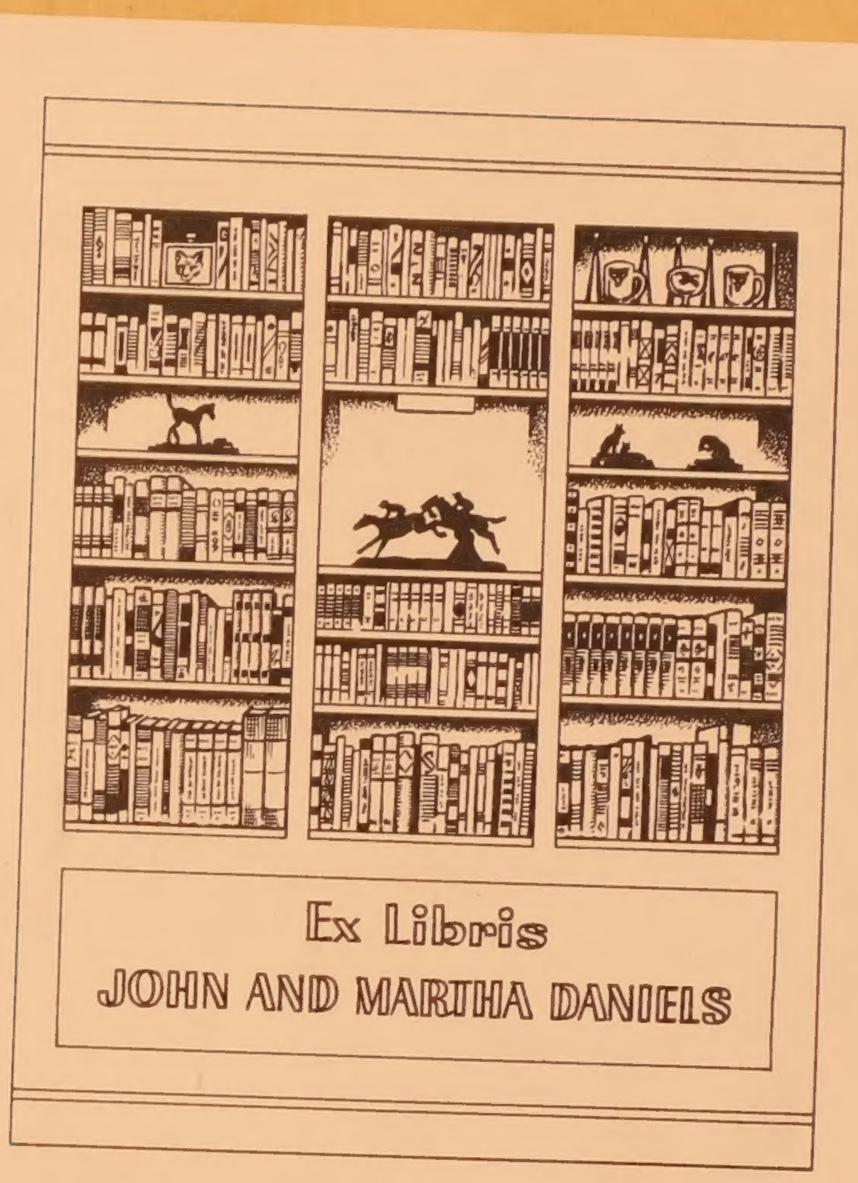

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JOHN AND MARTHA DANIELS

THE LIFE OF A SPORTSMAN

Amstead Abbey.

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THE
LIFE
OF A
SPORTSMAN
BY
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A SPORTSMAN

BY NIMROD

AUTHOR OF 'THE LIFE OF JOHN MYTTON, ESQ.'

With Thirty-six Coloured Illustrations

BY HENRY ALKEN

IN TWO VOLUMES

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PREFACE

My design and object in writing this work was not merely to depict the life of a *sportsman*, in the general—perhaps with some persons, unfavourable—acceptation of that term, but, taking higher ground, to portray the character of an English gentleman attached to the sports and pastimes of his country; and, likewise, to give a sketch of a country gentleman's family, in as close imitation as possible of those of the best description, with which it has been my good fortune to become acquainted. In fact, in many instances, the imitation or resemblance is so close, as not to be doubtful to many as to who are the original parties; and they themselves cannot be displeased with my selection, when they are intended to be displayed as examplars worthy of being followed by others.

The plan, or outline, of this half-true, half-fictitious story, is soon told. It is, as has already been observed, descriptive of a country gentleman, of large fortune and highly connected, having two sons and two daughters. He himself is a sportsman, but only to a certain extent; that is to say, he does not aspire to fox-hunting, but keeps a first-rate pack of harriers, and is also a good shot. His eldest son has nothing sporting in his constitution, but has all the good qualities that adorn and exalt our nature, and for which, of course, full credit is given him. The hero of my tale is the younger son, who, differing in tastes from his brother, enters into the sports of the field at a very early age, and becomes a thorough sportsman, in the legitimate sense of that, often wrongly applied, term. How far I have succeeded in portraying him as such, my readers must be my judges; I can only say, I have made him follow, as nearly as I was able, in the footsteps of those who, within my time and knowledge, have become the most eminent sportsmen of their day, both by 'flood and field.'

It would be unfaithful to nature, and, therefore, unworthy of my pen, were I to represent my young hero as totally guiltless of those common failings to which inexperienced youth is, for the most part, liable; but I have taken especial care to keep him clear of all vicious propensities which disgrace the gentleman and the Christian. In furtherance of this purpose, then, I occasionally place him in a dangerous position, the result of overweening confidence in others, so natural to ingenuous youth; but rescue him, in due time, partly by

his own proper principles, and also by the timely assistance of a faithful and generous friend. These little aberrations are the result of his quitting the noble and health-giving sports of the field for the dangerous seductions of the race-course, which involve him in considerable difficulties, by the expenses attendant on keeping race-horses in the first instance, and by the treacherous conduct of his trainer, in the second.

The situation in which I place my hero with his uncle is drawn from real life, and with but few exaggerations or additions. No doubt there are many such uncles, and many such nephews; and the moral to be drawn from the relative situations in which I place the two in question, may be neither uninstructive nor useless. Indeed, it has been my design, throughout the entire of the work, to impart to it a moral tone, so that should those who may read it not rise the better from the perusal, it will be their own fault, and not mine. At all events, there is nothing in the sentiments expressed, or the examples put forth, to make them anywise the worse.

In his character of a sportsman, I make my hero commence with the *lowest* branches of the art, of which ratcatching is, I believe, the type. He thence proceeds to the rabbit and the badger, progressing, gradually, to the higher sports of the field, and finishes as a Leicestershire fox-hunter, and a horseman of the first class. I have also made him a coachman—that is to say, an ardent amateur of the coach-box, characteristic of the era in which I place him, which is, as nearly as may be, my own. In truth, here I am myself, in some respects, his exemplar. He commences with his pony in harness, as I myself did. He then becomes a pupil of a celebrated coachman on his road, as was my own case; and, at length, he is not only considered *safe*—that is, fit to be trusted with the ribbons—but possesses as much execution on the coach-box as falls to the lot of most aspirants to the very difficult art; and, at length, I place him in a very trying position. By the death of his elder brother, his uncle, and his father, he becomes possessed of great wealth, and he does not abuse the boon. On the contrary, he endeavours to follow his father's example in fulfilling the duties of his station, and I leave him in the possession of the esteem of his neighbours and friends, without which the riches of a Crœsus afford little real satisfaction to the possessor of them.

Then I had another object in my view. The most careless observer of the course of worldly affairs must be aware that—as has been the case in all ages—in proportion as a country has arrived at the highest pitch of wealth and refinement, the taste for the humble, but nearly unalloyed pleasures of a country life, has more or less declined.

A tendency to this decline has been, to a certain extent, observable

in our own land, and fears have been expressed, lest the noblest of all our country sports—fox-hunting—may yield to this chilling, if not demoralising influence. For my own part, I do not think it will. I entertain that opinion of the force of the almost natural passion for hunting, and other manly diversions which has ever distinguished Englishmen from all other nations under the sun, that induces me to believe that it will continue to uphold fox-hunting as the pride and boast of all our national pastimes. We, however, do occasionally hear unpleasant forebodings to the contrary. 'Railroads,' says one croaker on the subject, 'spoil all hunting countries through which they pass, and one is about to traverse the cream of the Leicestershire hunts.' 'In a few years,' cries another, 'Paris and Brussels will be accessible in a few hours, as our fashionable watering-places already are.' 'Melton Mowbray falls off,' exclaims a third, 'no new settlers in the town, and the old ones will soon be giving up.' 'Young men leave off hunting after about their third season,' says a fourth. 'When many of the present masters of foxhounds shall be taken from us, none will be found masters in their stead, beyond a third or fourth season,' cries a fifth. 'Game preserves, and the accursed system of steeple-racing, is destructive of the sportsmanlike manner of riding to hounds, to the great discomfort of their owners,' says a sixth.

I am aware there is truth in some of these remarks, consequently cause for alarm; and it is on this account that I have, in these pages, striven to the utmost to give a high colour to a country life, and to represent the real modern sportsman, such as I find him to be—a character not excelled in ingenuous feelings, in liberal conduct, in extreme hospitality, in sincerity of friendship and all other social virtues, by any class in which it has been my lot to move. Where, indeed, was there a fairer or better specimen to be found than in the late Mr. Warde, fifty-seven years a master of foxhounds, and, therefore, called—'The Father of the Field'? Who ever heard him utter an ill-natured word respecting any one, either living or dead? Where was there a kinder friend, or a better neighbour? and, above all things, where was his equal as a companion? Neither can I stop here in my panegyric on this fine specimen of the old English country gentleman and sportsman. Rough as was his exterior, Mr. Warde was accomplished and well informed, and capable of adapting his conversation to any society into which he might be thrown. In short, it is a matter of doubt whether there has existed a man, whose name has not been long before the public, either in the capacity of a senator, a soldier, a sailor, or an author, so universally known as Mr. Warde of Squerries, in Kent, was to Englishmen, in all quarters of the globe. Let me, however, not be understood to exhibit him as a pattern, in all respects,

for young men of the present day to imitate. Although, doubtless, the somewhat rough exterior which he adopted, was, in great part, adopted for the sake of effect to the *tout ensemble* of his character, still a more polished one than his was, may now be required, in conformity to the increased refinement of the age.

In the following pages, there may be something to amuse if not to instruct the female mind. At all events, there is a little love-making, and its results; and there is one instance of a narrow escape by my young hero, of the almost inevitable consequences of an unlawful attachment. Upon the whole, however, the bright side of human nature is displayed, and the cultivation of cheerfulness and good-humour earnestly recommended as the sovereign antidote to those mental disorders—peevishness and discontent—which distract the mind, and increase the evils of life, without even the chance of either removing or lightening them. Cheerfulness and good-humour are the harbingers of virtue, and produce that serenity which disposes the mind to friendship, love, gratitude, and every other social affection. They make us contented with ourselves, our friends, and our situation, and expand the heart to all the interests of humanity. It is in this spirit, then, that I have written, as others more worthy of the task have done before me—in that of Lucretius, indeed, when he penned the following lines:

'Sed veluti pueris absinthia tetra medentes
Cùm dare conantur, priùs oras pocula circùm
Contingunt mellis dulci flavoque liquore.'

NIMROD.

June 24th, 1842.

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THE

LIFE OF A SPORTSMAN

CHAPTER I

Introductory—The hero presented—Items of his birth, parentage, and education, together with traits of his idiosyncrasy, whereby 'coming events cast their shadows before.'

In the latter part of the last century, in one of the finest of the midland counties of England, lived Andrew Raby, a commoner, of large possessions, and of very old English blood. When, however, I use the term 'large possessions,' I do not desire to convey the idea of his having an income sufficient to keep up a degree of pomp and dignity equal to that of his titled superiors, but such as enabled him fully to support the respectable and honourable station of an English country gentleman, and to indulge in all those pursuits which were congenial to his own taste, and, likewise, to exercise almost unbounded hospitality towards his friends. In fact, his rental was a little above ten thousand pounds per annum; which, when the usual drawbacks of agencies, repairs, and other heavy outgoings attendant on landed property, in addition to an annuity he paid to a sister, were deducted, left him—for he had no interest of money to pay to mortgagees (indeed it was his boast, that no lawyer held as much parchment security of his as would cover a crown piece)—a clear annual income of seven thousand pounds; at least he reckoned not on more, on a fair average of years. With this comparatively limited income, he inhabited a house suitable for a man of twice his means. It covered three sides of a quadrangular court; displaying a sumptuous character in its architectural

ornaments without, and containing elegant and spacious apartments within. Planned after the fashion of the Elizabethan age, Amstead Abbey stood on an island, formed by a deep moat, and within the palings of an extensive and finely timbered park, containing a herd of deer sufficiently ample for the use of a private gentleman; the gardens, too, were large, no less than three hundred yards of '*glass*'—as forcing-houses are technically denominated—being visible in them, exclusive of hot walls. A farm of three hundred acres of the best staple land of the county was in occupation, under the eye of a Scotch bailiff; and, having been conducted on improved principles, it greatly outstripped its neighbours in its produce, and turned to a very profitable account: the surrounding country was also of the richest and most valuable description.

Mr. Raby's establishment consisted, indoors, of a butler and two footmen, with all the requisite females, and was only deficient in one respect—it wanted the *man cook* to aid the English kitchen-maid; but against this there was a prejudice which time has since removed. At the period to which I allude, there was an objection against these *chefs* of the kitchen, on the score of wasteful extravagance in their operations; experience, however, has since shown that their art is practised to advantage in all large establishments. By the almost magical power of the *rechauffoir*, the remains of yesterday's dinner instead of being looked lightly upon, if not in great part cast to the dogs, are sent smoking and savoury into the servants' hall, and so disguised as to leave the inmates of it in doubt whether the dishes are *rechauffés* or not. His woman cook, however, was as good as high wages could procure, and his guests had no cause for complaint. But the style of living was truly English, and, as such, the assistance of *Monsieur* was less necessary; the consumption of animals was prodigious from the number of comers and goers, in addition to the family itself; and did a sirloin of beef make its appearance on a Sunday, and a round on the Monday, they might be looked for in vain on the Tuesday.

There was one species of luxury—refinement, indeed, it may be termed, in reference to those times—in which Mr. Raby indulged; and this was the selection of his footmen and postillions. The first were London-bred; he declared that he never saw a country-bred footman who could bring a message

into a room, or an under-butler of the same genus, who could clean a service of plate; and no man's table in the country was better set out than Mr. Raby's. Of his coach-horses he was justly proud, and he liked to see them ridden and driven to his mind. His postillions—for in those days gentlemen's carriages in the country were not driven from the box—were always Hounslow-bred ones; that is to say, sons of Hounslow post-boys, having had their education on the road. His turn-out, in this respect, was perfect.

The out-of-doors establishment was still more numerous. There was a pack of harriers in the kennel, six able coach-horses in one stable, ten hunters in another, besides a hack or two to go to post, or to carry 'how do ye do's' about the country—no sinecure in those days: a capital team of spaniels for cock-shooting, pointers and setting dogs for partridges and hares, under the care of an experienced gamekeeper, and a small kennel of greyhounds to contend for prizes at the neighbouring coursing meetings. One appendage to the present establishment of an English gentleman, however, was wanting; I mean a band of night-watchers to protect the game from poachers, an operation beyond the power of any single keeper. And yet it is not to be supposed that there were no poachers of game in those days, as, in that case, Fielding's Black George would have been an anachronism; but the *battue* system was unknown. Still, of pheasants, there was a sprinkling in the woods of this estate; and the delight which the Squire and his friends experienced when they saw Juno on the foot of a pheasant, and the bird shot dead to her point, more than equalled that afforded by a *battue* of *three hundred head in one day*, the game being put up by stable-boys, without the use of dogs, the Newfoundland retriever excepted.

But the reader may well ask how all this was done on an income of seven thousand pounds.—By management, in the first place; and, in the next, by only occasionally visiting London for the season, Mr. Raby having little inclination for the bustle and hurry of a town life; and Lady Charlotte (he had married an Earl's daughter) had likewise the good sense to be satisfied with what she had seen of it, in its best form, during her residence with her father in Grosvenor Square. But the 'management!' that calls forth some remarks.

As procrastination is the thief of time, payment delayed is a

thief of another description. It is not, *per se*, a robber, but it opens the door to robbery of every description; and *gentlemen* who require long *credit*, pay twenty per cent. at least for it. Mr. Raby, however, went on quite another tack in the conduct of his expenditure. In lieu of paying a bonus, that is, what is called the 'put-on-price' for long credit, he received a discount by paying ready money for everything purchased in London, or other distant places; and, in his own immediate neighbourhood, on the first Monday in every month, all his small bills were discharged. He had a list of them on his dressing-table, when he came down from his chamber in the morning, and, having examined the items, and found them correct, wrote a cheque on his banker for the amount. He reckoned that by this arrangement he saved five hundred pounds per annum, which about paid his wine-merchant's bill. It is scarcely necessary to add that, exclusive of any other consideration, this punctuality in the disbursement of a large income rendered Mr. Raby very popular in his neighbourhood; and knowing, from experience of the world, that

> When the means are gone that buy this praise,
> The breath is gone whereof this praise is made,

he never deviated from the practice to the last year of his life. In fact, so much esteemed was he, as a gentleman and a landlord, that he might have represented his county in Parliament, had he been disposed so to have done; but either from a disinclination to take the onus of such a responsible situation upon himself, or, it might have been, from a mistrust of his ability to do justice to it, it devolved upon a neighbouring baronet. Still, let it not be supposed that Mr. Raby was a man of mere animal life, given to decry the value of literary attainments, averse to the fashionable refinements of that polished age, much less insensible to the common feelings of our nature. Far from it, no man indulged more in those sympathies which unite landlord and tenant, master and servant, in a bond of reciprocal kindness and good offices, nor more strictly performed the higher duties of his station. But his chief purpose was this:—he wished to be considered, as nearly as his nature would admit, a perfect specimen of the English country gentleman, whose head modern philosophy had not yet enlightened, at the expense of the best feelings of

the heart; unsophisticated by foreign fopperies; a man whose character could face the world, and whose spirit would not fear it. Again, this maxim was often in his mouth: 'Wealth,' he would say, 'is not his who possesses it, but his who enjoys it'; and he acted up to the moral of it. '*Lætus aliis, sapiens sibi,*' he loved to see his friends enjoying themselves by his means; and, as regarded himself, his object was to gather the rose and leave the thorn behind.

Mr. Raby, however, being the father of my hero, I must now speak of him in the capacity of a sportsman; and a sportsman he was, although but to a certain extent. In the first place, he was not a fox-hunter, but confined himself to his harriers, which were quite perfect of their kind—indeed, the crack pack of all the neighbouring countries. And well might they be such, for the breed had been preserved and improved upon, for more than half a century, by his father and himself; and, from the number of walks he had for puppies amongst his own tenants, and those of his neighbours, he bred as many young hounds every year, to make a choice of, as some masters of foxhounds. Then his hunting establishment was perfect; and, as regarded horses, at least, not far from being equal to that necessary for foxhounds hunting only three days in the week. He kept ten slapping hunters for himself and his two men; and he never had less than forty couples of working hounds in his kennel. Nor must I pass over the manner in which his pack were turned out. As for themselves, they were, as I have already observed, perfect. There was not an inch between any one and another in height; their form was that of the modern foxhound in miniature; their tongues light, but musical, and their condition as perfect as their form. His huntsman was likewise a model of his order, having been the grandson of one man, and the son of another, who had filled the same situation in life; he was, therefore, well bred for his calling. He was, however, what is called 'a character,' a bundle of vagaries in his way. In the first place, although a horseman of the first class, he was difficult to be suited with horses; neither did he fancy any that he had not himself made choice of. And even here appeared the 'character.' He would take a fancy to animals by no means likely to make hunters, but which, as though instinct directed him in his election, seldom failed in turning out such. The mention of one of these animals, in

fact, is now in the mouths of some old men in the parish, when speaking of Dick, the Squire's huntsman, and his lop-eared horse, which he purchased out of a neighbouring gentleman's coach-stable. Mounted on this horse, however, Dick was in his element; beautifully did he ride him to the music of his crack pack, and, did he espy among his field any gentleman whom he knew to have hunted in Leicestershire (he designated all such '*your silver-handled sportsmen*'), awful must have been the fence that turned him ten yards from his line, when his hounds were on a good scent.

Nor was Dick less notable in the field. He 'did the trick' in a style differing from his brother huntsmen of the *scut*, and, to manifest his superiority by quitting the beaten track, hunted his pack as if they had been foxhounds. He *tallyhoed* his hares when they were in view; hallooed his hounds forward, cap in hand, to a point; and, by forcing his game to fly beyond their knowledge of the country in which they were bred, had runs of extraordinary duration. In fact, such was the speed of these harriers, from the head they carried in chase, the result of the care taken in the breeding of them, that many first-rate hunters —ay, and hunters of fame too—have been blown to a dead stand-still, in the attempt to lie by the side of them in a burst, when the ground has been tender under their feet, and the scent good; and yet no man had more patience than Dick, when his hounds were brought down to their noses by the stain from cattle or sheep, or by a passing cloud or storm. Here he was the hare-hunter; and often has been the time when success has rewarded his patience, after that of his field had been exhausted. What did you do with your last hare? would be the question put to him many times during the season, by Mr. Raby, on his return home, he himself having left in a moment of despair. 'I *persevered*, sir, and killed her,' was the general reply.

Mr. Raby pursued one practice connected with his hunting, which might, with advantage, be more generally observed. He provided his huntsman with a book, in which were inserted the names of all the occupiers of land over which he sported, and he ordered that a hare should be given to each in his turn, and oftentimes twice, during the season.

But Mr. Raby was not a fox-hunter; for, in the first place, although an elegant horseman, and an excellent judge of the

animal, he was not a strong-nerved man over a country. He was shy of timber and wide brooks, and, therefore, judiciously avoided entering into a pursuit in which he was aware he could not shine. Next, he was bred up a hare-hunter, and considered that the act of confining his attention to one sort of hunting would be the surest means of perpetuating the fame of his father's kennel, if not of increasing it. Thirdly, he had numerous duties to perform as a magistrate, and otherwise, exclusive of those of his own domestic station, which were less interrupted by the gentler pursuit of the hare; but when the foxhounds appeared in his neighbourhood, he would often see them find their fox, and they were nearly certain to do so in any of his own covers. Had a keeper of his levelled his gun at a fox, or designedly caught him in a trap, he would have been discharged on the morrow, as having committed a flagrant disobedience of orders.

Neither was Mr. Raby a racing man. To speak the truth, although quiet, even to diffidence, in his deportment, there was in his nature an ambition to excel in what he attempted. His estate was the best conditioned in his county; his harriers were, perhaps, the best of that day in England; his pointers and setting dogs—for he used the latter to the net—were perfect of their kind; and his breed of spaniels was sought after by every sportsman who had heard of it. But he was aware that, had he sought for it, excellence on the *turf* was out of his reach. Even the legitimate means of ensuring success, as the experience of many of his friends had convinced him, were doubtful; the illegitimate ones he would not have availed himself of, if presented to him.

There is one part of Mr. Raby's conduct as a sportsman of which notice should not, on any account, be omitted, inasmuch as it affords an example highly worthy of imitation by all whose means give them the power. I allude to the generous care he took of his worn-out hunters and coach-horses, in lieu of the too common practice of selling them for trifling sums, and exposing them to severe labour when least able to endure it. He had, after the manner of a master of foxhounds of the present day,[1] a range of pastures sacred to the repose of these pensioners on his bounty, in which they enjoyed themselves in perfect freedom from labour, and in full supply of all that old

[1] The Viscount Kelburne.

age requires. Each of the fields had a comfortable shed, to which they could resort, to protect themselves from cold in winter, as well as from the gad-fly in the summer, and in which, in the first-named season, was the well-furnished hay-crib, and, occasionally, still more nourishing food. Mr. Raby took a pleasure in exhibiting these pensioners to his friends. 'These animals have been all valuable servants to me,' he would say, on such occasions, 'and have strong claims upon my protection. That roan gelding, which has now scarcely a leg to support his body upon, carried me, with my hounds, thirteen seasons, and only, to my recollection, gave me five falls, two of which were not to be laid to his account. He was once as proud and prancing as he is now humble and decrepid, and, I fear, I shall soon be obliged to have an end put to his days, as a lesser evil of two. Yon milk-white horse—once a dark iron-grey, dragging his slow length along—was, in the days of his youth, for I bred him, such a roving, riotous fellow, that no hedge or gate could keep him within bounds, and it was a day's work to catch him. Then, when caught, he was no horse for me; but as I happened at that time to have a sort of dare-devil lad, as whipper-in, who valued him for his skittishness and impetuosity, he made him an excellent hunter. Now such was precisely the character of this lad himself, who, after rather a wild, but not vicious career, sobered down, like his colt, into an excellent servant, and lived with me, as a whipper-in, till his death, which was occasioned by a bad fall, but not from that horse. In fact, the horse and his rider appeared to reform themselves together. But the most extraordinary animal here is that strawberry-coloured mare, which you see reposing in the shade. She was purchased out of a hack-chaise, for the sum of twenty-five guineas, by my huntsman, who took a fancy to her; and, although, as you will perceive, showing no signs of high breeding, nor yet of much speed, she proved the best hunter, for the weight she had to carry, I have ever yet seen. It is evident that neither her sire nor her dam could have been of pure racing blood; but report says that the latter was brought into this county by some gipsies from the New Forest, in Hampshire, and hence her excellence is accounted for. She was, I am inclined to think, the produce of the celebrated Marske, the sire of Eclipse, who covered mares—New Forest ponies amongst them, of course—

at the low price of one guinea. In her best days, it was difficult to blow this mare in a burst: no fence that could be jumped by a horse could pound her; nor did I ever know her to come home to the stable tired, after the longest day's work. She is now, however, as you will perceive by her languid eye, her distended carcass, low back, and fallen crest, in extreme old age, the evils of which I have taken some pains to alleviate, in consideration of her fourteen years' services, and I rejoice in the reflection that a large offer did not induce me to part with her when in her prime.'

Having sketched the character of Mr. Raby, that of his lady shall follow, and a few words will suffice. It has already been said that Lady Charlotte Raby was an Earl's daughter. By uniting herself in marriage to a commoner, she had descended a step in society, according to the opinion of the world, although, in her own eyes her husband was ennobled beyond the power of a coronet to dignify him, by his conduct as a man and a husband. Neither did she look back with regret towards the theatre of her early life, in which her charms and accomplishments had met with universal admiration. She had enjoyed nearly seven years of what is called the fashionable London World, and that in all its glory; and she had had enough of it. She had become the wife of a country gentleman, and was the mother of four children; and she learnt, from the experience of the first seven years of so very different a life, this great moral truth:—that, although pleasure, amusement, and oblivion of self are to be found at the ball-room or at the opera, and although they occasionally hover around the stranger's hearth, still of all the sources of human happiness, domestic life is the richest and most productive; and had Lady Charlotte Raby read Horace, she would have exclaimed, with him, whilst reviewing her situation at Amstead Abbey, in the bosom of her own family, and surrounded by friends in whose esteem she lived, '*Quod petis hic est.*' In other words, she might have added this postscript to her answers to the letters of her London correspondents, who transmitted to her the doings of the gay world:—*What you look for elsewhere, I find here.*

There was, however, one feature in the amiable lady's character which I am unwilling not to exhibit to my readers. It too often happens that highly-bred women, who emerge from

the vortex of the fashionable world to reside in the country with the husbands of their choice, look slightingly on the wives and daughters of the gentlemen in the neighbourhood who may not have had the *entrée* into similar walks of life (from which, indeed, their situation and circumstances excluded them), or are unable to exhibit so many quarterings in their escutcheons. This was not Lady Charlotte's failing. On the contrary, like a woman of good sense, she conformed to the situation which she had selected for herself in every respect; and although, within the circle of her visiting, there were several ladies holding rank nearly equal to her own, still there were no young ladies of her acquaintance oftener to be seen at the Abbey than the daughters of the rector of the parish.

The rector of Amstead was an old-fashioned country clergyman of whom John Bull was once wont to be so proud, and to whom obedience and tithes were paid without a murmur. Enabled, by the value of his preferment, the prudent management of his income, and a limited family—two daughters and one son—to make a most respectable appearance in society, and to add to the valuable instruction given by him to his congregation in the church, assistance to such as stood in need of it at their homes, he was extremely beloved in his parish. In fact, he was to the poor a 'Man of Ross'; and to his flock so much a pastor to their mind that dissent was unknown in his parish. And yet the rector was a sportsman—at least to a certain extent. He was an excellent shot, in cover especially, the woodcock being his favourite quarry. And here his turnout was somewhat remarkable, for he was always accompanied by his clerk, who was not only an excellent beater of a wood, but, having been the son of an Amstead gamekeeper, well knew the haunts of a cock, in all the covers of his neighbourhood. The clerk, however, like his rector, was much respected in his own village, where he was considered a man of no mean accomplishments, inasmuch as, exclusively of his sacred avocation, he was both a shoemaker and a schoolmaster, which induced a wag to indite this couplet over his door:—

John Wells' trades are three—
Cobbler, clerk, and *domine!*

The mention of one more person is essential to the development of my tale—Mr. Beaumont Raby, brother to the Squire

of Amstead, but of very different habits and pursuits. In the first place he was not a sportsman; and this for reasons independent of a natural disinclination for all sports of the field. His immense size would have been an obstacle to it, for he might have played Falstaff without stuffing. Again, his health was not good. He had incurred some of the penalties attendant on idleness and high feeding; but he equalled his brother in kindheartedness and good feeling, and exceeded him in accomplishments, the result of the life he had led. His history is this:—Having had an ample fortune left him when a child, by a person to whom he was but distantly related, he entered, with his brother, as a gentleman commoner of Christ Church, Oxford, where he took a very high degree. He then became a member of the Inner Temple, not with the view of making a profession of the law, but to qualify himself for a member of the senate, which it was his ambition to become. Nor was he disappointed. He sat in two short Parliaments, during which he made three speeches, each affording the promise of brighter days to come. They were not only occasionally adorned by classic flowers, culled from the poets and historians of the Augustan age, but they were also remarkable for clear views of their subjects, and a business-like manner of debating them. The natural indolence of his disposition, however, obtained the mastery over his inclinations; his seat in the house was not sought for a third time; he became a mere votary of ease and pleasure—in fact, what is called a regular London man; thinking with Sir Fopling Flutter, in the play, that 'all beyond Hyde Park Corner is a desert.' At all events, the simple and humble pleasures which a country life affords would have been to him something more than insipid. Nevertheless, the two brothers were greatly attached to each other; were inseparable when in London together; corresponded regularly when at a distance; and, perhaps once in three years, the ci-devant Templar and ex-member of the senate would quit the gay scenes of London and Bath to pass a few weeks at the Abbey.

It has already been stated that the family of Mr. Raby consisted of four—two sons and two daughters—all of whom lived to attain their majority: Francis, the second son, however, is the hero of this story, and here his history begins:—

He was born in the year 1776, and being the issue of sound

and healthy parents, and a perfect and well-shapen infant, soon struggled into what may be called life; that is to say, the 'mewling and puking in the nurse's arms' was, in due time, succeeded by a strong desire to get upon his legs and amuse himself. In fact, although to declare the end from the beginning is not within the scope of human power, there was something about this boy, at the end of his third year, which indicated that, one day or another, in one pursuit or other, he was likely to overtop the crowd. It is true the human mind is made for action; but this child was as active and restless as the hyæna, and showed a desire to pry into everything within his reach; and the predominance of his taste was not long in displaying itself. If he found a stick, he wanted a string to tie to the end of it; and if he found a string, he wanted a stick to tie the string to. In fact, a whip was his delight, but the sight of a horse transported him; and from morning to night did his little tongue ring the changes of horse and whip, whip and horse, varied only by an occasional notice of a favourite dog, that was allowed to make its domicile in the nursery. In short, as the dawn of morning generally shows the day, it was evident that Francis Raby was to be a sportsman.

As may be imagined from their situation in life, Francis Raby and his brother (who was named after his father) had every care taken of them in their infancy; and, before they were eight years of age, their characters were pretty clearly developed. But as 'one star differeth from another in glory,' so did the characters of these brothers vary in a very unusual degree. Andrew was always in the house, and with his mother when he could be; Francis out of doors, and about the stables as soon as he could break loose and steal away. Andrew delighted in a book; Francis appeared to have an antipathy to one. Andrew was pale and sickly, and subject to infantine diseases; Francis was a miniature waggoner in frame and constitution. In one respect, however, they assimilated. Both showed indications of talent, and, in their exercises with their tutor, who prepared them for Eton, 'the promise of a goodly day to-morrow.'

There is nothing more certain than that all things must have a beginning; and what may be called the sporting career of Francis Raby commenced about his tenth year, when he became

"Yoicks! Tally-ho! Look out for the pastry."

possessed of a couple of terriers, of a good game breed, sore enemies not only to the rats about the buildings, but to all the cats of the house, which were hunted by them about once a week. On one occasion, however, Master Francis had almost driven the jest too far; for, having chased one of them into the kitchen, with his terriers close at her tail, she leapt on the table and upset a tureen of turtle soup, that was on the point of being served up to a dinner-party. Frank, however—for such he was always called, as most Francises are—got well out of the scrape by his great popularity among the servants, who either took the mishap upon themselves, or laid it to that scapegoat in all families—the cat. Frank and his terriers, however, were much dreaded in the neighbourhood by all who had favourite tabbies, as a gripe from either Pincher or Vixen was very apt to prove fatal. But, did Mr. Raby know of this cat-killing propensity? and, if so, did he encourage it? The general character of that gentleman leads to the conclusion that he would not have encouraged, in his children, cruelty to animals, a vice the very reverse of the characteristic of the thorough English sportsman. Nevertheless he was well aware of this truism—that to restrain the pleasures and pursuits of youth with too tight a hand, is as preposterous as to be angry with the spring of the year because it produces nothing but blossoms, or to expect from that early season the fruits of autumn in their perfection; and it must be admitted that, when he saw his favourite son, Frank—for most fathers have favourites—with a couple of terriers at his heels, and his ferret bag in his hand, he was delighted beyond measure. 'That boy,' he would say, 'will be a sportsman, and one day or another will see him at the top of the tree, if he lives.' And he had a right so to predict of him. No matter whether pleasure or business be the object, whoever pursues either to any purpose, must do so *con amore*, which was truly Frank's case. No sooner did his tutor dismiss him, than he was at war with one description of vermin or another; and he was wonderfully expert in his calling.

As similarity of taste inspires regard, Frank, as he progressed in years, formed a strong alliance with one of the head keeper's sons, who, as his father had initiated him into the entrapping art, was of no small service in his pursuits; and such was their success in ferreting rabbits, that they furnished the supply

for the house, of which they were not a little proud, as there was no great abundance of them on the estate—Mr. Raby being averse to their increase, on account of the injury done by them to young trees. To a certain extent, however, he wished to preserve them, as the means of ensuring litters of foxes in his covers. Still, as it may be supposed, this intimate alliance with Jem Perren, the young keeper, was not without its effect on the aspiring mind of his young master. From the superiority of Jem's knowledge in these matters, as well as having the advantage in years, Frank looked up to him as his chief preceptor—his reverence the tutor only being second. Then, again, Jem was an accomplished youth of his kind. In the first place, Nature had not been unkind to him; he inherited a great share of his father's acuteness, and, for his years, more than his share of his Herculean frame and strength. In fact, he was quite the 'cock of the walk' among all the lads of the village in which he had received his *learning*, and had often amused his young master with accounts of the various battles he had been engaged in, at least those which had ended in victory.

As may be supposed, all this was not lost on our hero, who listened to such tales with delight; neither can we marvel at his having done so. He was now in his thirteenth year, and had been reading history with his tutor, as well as listening to his brother when reading it, in portions considered beyond his own reach at the time; and had paid particular attention to the accounts given of those heroes of antiquity who had signalised themselves in gymnastic exercises, boxers and wrestlers especially. He found that the first kings of the world obtained their dominion by being superior to all others in strength and courage—in fact, that, even in Homer's time, the *argumentum baculinum* was essential to the existence of all little governments. Leaving out of the question those apocryphal heroes, Hercules, Theseus, Pollux, and others, who were feigned to have been the original inventors of games and combats (considered so admirably calculated for rendering the bodies of youth robust and vigorous, and capable of supporting the severe fatigue of a soldier's life, that they were wisely made to form a part of their religious worship), he had read that the most celebrated characters of their day excelled in the boxing and wrestling arts. Epaminondas, for example,

"Never mind 'em—they won't hurt."

one of the greatest generals and most perfect characters that Greece ever produced, was a patron of, as well as conspicuous in, all such exercises; and it is gravely stated in history that a knowledge of the art of wrestling gave to the Thebans under his command the battle of Leuctra, and decided the fate of Sparta. Having read of all this, his wonder ceased at finding that master of the wrestling art, Hippomachus, declare that he could discover his scholars at a distance, though they were only carrying meat from the shambles; or that crowns of olive should have been bestowed by the Eleans on boys of his own age, who had excelled in gymnastic exploits. Nor was the art of boxing exhibited to his young, but aspiring mind, in less glowing colours. He found not only that Milo, one of the athletæ of his day, could knock down a bull by a blow of his arm, but, by the example of Dares, that the science of self-defence, as the modern term is, was not beneath the notice of a prince. So far from it, indeed, that, among the Greek and Roman nobility and gentry, scarcely a day, he found, passed without their practising bodily exercises in the gymnasium—the use of the cæstus among the number; and, to his surprise, he learned that even the love of gladiatorial shows amongst the Romans increased as they progressed in civilisation, and their manners became more refined; and that such exhibitions flourished during the reigns of two of their most humane emperors, Trajan and Titus. Then, again, he had listened to his father while discussing the subject with his friends, in reference to the doings of those days when Broughton, Slack, Humphries, Mendoza, Big Ben, and others, all famous men in the ring, were in their zenith. Mr. Raby, however, was no patron of pugilism. His duties as a magistrate forbade it; still, as conducted in those days, he was rather favourably inclined towards it than otherwise. At all events, he would occasionally deliver his sentiments on the subject somewhat after this manner:—'I am doubtful,' he would say, 'as to the effect of conflicts between animals, on the courage of the people; at the same that I question whether the extraordinary courage of the game-cock was not intended as an example to us. One of the greatest orators of our day thinks it was; and in defence of the hypothesis, instances the *pluck* and *bottom* of Englishmen, who chiefly encourage these combats, and conduct them after the most

scientific manner. Our boxing matches, or prize-fights, as they are now called, are contests of the same kind as the fights of the gladiators, only upon a lower scale; with this difference, that no man—unless he chooses—is opposed to unequal force; and if we could divest the mind of the fact that the contest is not so much for glory as for money, such has been the display of manly intrepidity, firmness, gallantry, activity, presence of mind, and strength, which some of our late prize-fights have called forth, that no man need be ashamed of having viewed them with interest. At all events, suppress boxing wholly, and there will be an end to that sense of honour, spirit, and gallantry which distinguishes the common people of this country from those of all others, and they will resort to practices, and the use of weapons in their quarrels, which they now scarcely think of; and which are cowardly and disgraceful, because they are commonly resorted to in the dark, or when the object of vengeance is off his guard. They would decide their quarrels with knives instead of fists, and the life of no man, in the lower ranks of society, who had given much cause of offence, could be said to be safe. In fact, a great lawyer has pronounced the laws of boxing to be the laws of peace, "teaching that no unfair advantage shall be taken by either of the combatants, and putting a stop to a malignant mode of procuring satisfaction. They inculcate a love of fair play, and foster the natural courage of our countrymen, whilst they create a disgust in their minds for the treacherous use of the stiletto or knife."

'Still,' Mr. Raby would say, 'it is not impossible that the system of prize-fighting, which Broughton calls "a truly British art," may become the reproach, rather than the characteristic of our countrymen. The persons who take up the profession of public prize-fighters are of nearly the lowest grade in society, and are too often unable to resist a bribe to induce them to do wrong—that is, to sell their battles for money—although there are, and have been, many honourable exceptions. They partake, indeed,' he would say, 'of some of the obloquy that attached to the Roman gladiators, humorously set forth in a Greek epigram on a bad tenant, from the pen of Palladius, which has been thus translated:—

'"I let my house, the other day,
To one who dealt in corn and hay:

Next morning I found, ah! woe is me,
A dreadful pugilist is he.
When will you pay my rent? quoth I;
He lifts his fist and cocks his eye.
I then to Pollux made my vow,
Although on peace my thoughts were now,
That I, before next quarter day,
Might learn to box, or run away.'"

It was not to be expected that much science in the art of self-defence was to be found in a gamekeeper's lad; still many 'turns-up' with those who were bigger and older than himself had imparted to Jem Perren a tolerable notion of taking some care of himself; and he boasted of no less than three favourite stops, and likewise of one very telling blow. These were, of course, imparted to our hero, who would often be seen taking lessons from his green-jacketed preceptor; and truly he was soon a proficient. He could not only hit very hard, in which his weight told to his advantage, but he could stop, and get away, in a manner surprising for his age. Hence arose one of the disadvantages of a slight knowledge of the pugilistic art, combined with the power and inclination to put it into practice. It created in Frank Raby a domineering spirit, which, notwithstanding his good sense, and many excellent qualities, adhered to him, in some measure, through life. Although his brother was his senior by nearly two years, he treated him as his junior, and, by the weight of his fist, established his claim of precedence. No boys in the neighbouring villages dared to cross his path in his pursuits, provided they were near his own age, for his name was up. On one occasion, however, he signalised himself beyond the expectation of his admiring friends; and, from his extreme good nature, and kind disposition towards the necessitous poor, he had many such in the neighbourhood in which he was known. Passing through a village, in one of his roving walks, he espied one of those half-baked, half-nursed ragamuffins, a specimen of whom about one parish in every six affords, unmercifully beating a defenceless orphan not much more than half his own size. The chivalrous spirit of our hero would not brook this; so, throwing down his hat, he gave him 'a chattering facer,' the term, as his preceptor Jem informed him, for a heavy thump on the mouth, and instantly put himself 'into attitude.' Ragamuffin did the

same, when a smart round ensued, rather in his favour; but the young one was nowise daunted. The old blood of the Rabys warmed in his young veins at every blow, and he said to himself, 'I'll lick this snob, or die.' Presently the whole village became alarmed for the safety of Master Francis. Out ran the apothecary from his house, and the mother of one of the Amstead housemaids from hers, both insisting on some of the lookers-on interfering, and putting an end to the fight. It happened, however, that the coachman had walked down to the village with his young master, and he stoutly asserted that Master Francis was 'all right. He'll leather two such chaps as that,' said coachey, 'and I'll go and see fair play.' The result was thus:—In the fifth round, the young one hit his opponent such a smasher in his teeth, that he turned cur and ran off, amidst the hootings of all present; thus verifying the maxim, that 'thrice is he armed who hath his quarrel just.' Even the magpie in the cage chattered, as if exulting to see justice so summarily obtained for a poor orphan lad.

'Come into my house, Master Francis,' said the doctor, 'that I may see what injury you have sustained. Here is a blow over the left eye to begin with, and it will be black in a few hours; what will your mamma say?' 'Oh!' said the coachman, 'he can tell my lady that Rodney (the pony) threw up his head, and struck him on the face; she won't know no better.' 'But your thumb, Master Francis, you have cut it rather deep, by a blow against one of the young rascal's teeth,' resumed the doctor. 'Oh!' observed coachey, 'that will be soon settled; he can tell my lady he took a shot at a rook out of Jem Perren's gun, and that it was too high loaded, and hit him a hard blow on his hand. Besides, from what I know of my lady, dash me if I don't think she'd like to know how young master served out that cowardly scoundrel, for she once stopped the carriage on purpose to give the poor orphan he had been beating a shilling, and she has twice had him clothed. You know, doctor, his father worked in her flower-garden.' 'But the tutor, Master Francis?' continued Esculapius. 'Oh, bother the tutor!' replied the coachman; 'they tells me he is a great scholard, but he's as soft as a pat of butter; Master Francis can soon gammon *him*, as he has often done before. And as to master, I know what he will

"He'll leather two such chaps as that!"

say: "Never let a horse hit you in your face with his head, Frank; it is a symptom of bad horsemanship. When a horse plunges, or rears, always keep your head and person a little inclined to the left side of him, and then, should he lose his balance, and fall backward, you slip off before he comes to the ground." I heard him say those very words to Master Raby the other day.' Here the coachman and his young master took their departure homeward, the former repeating his lesson, and assuring Frank, at the same time, that if he would come into the servants' hall before he went to bed, he would clap a raw beef-steak to his face, as the fighting-men do, which would take out all the blackness by the morrow.

The hour of dessert having arrived, in walked Master Francis with his brother and two sisters, looking as demure as a saint. 'What have you done to your face, my dear?' inquired Lady Charlotte; 'it is much swollen above your left eye.' 'Rodney threw up his head with me this morning, mamma, and struck me in the face,' was his reply. 'Oh, Frank!' said Mr. Raby, 'how could you let him do that? A good horseman never suffers from such an accident. Should his horse begin to play tricks, he always keeps his own head inclined towards the left, and then he cannot be struck as you have been. I have known instances of persons having nearly every tooth knocked out by blows from horse's heads.' Frank said nothing, but refused to eat an orange, until twice asked to do so. As he was peeling it, the wound on his hand appeared. 'Why, Frank,' exclaimed Lady Charlotte, 'you have been in perils to-day; did Rodney throw you?' 'No, mamma,' he replied, 'I was taking a shot at a rook out of Jem's gun, and it was loaded so high that it struck me on my hand. But it will soon be well, and coachman says if I come to him before I go to bed to-night, he will do for me what the boxers do—clap a raw beef-steak under my night-cap, and I shall have no black eye to-morrow.' 'Nasty fellow!' exclaimed Lady Charlotte; 'I insist upon it, he does no such thing. What could put it into the man's head to doctor my children?' Frank was again silent, when he was at length addressed by the tutor, in rather a grave tone. 'If you had remained at home this morning, Frank, and done what I wished you—translated that chapter in Aurelius, *De viris illustribus*, and finished your exercise on the battle of Pharsalia, you would not have met with these

disasters, but would have been able to have taken the field with the harriers to-morrow, whereas you will now be obliged to remain at home, as I fear not even the raw beef-steak would have prevented your having a black eye, in which case you could not, of course, appear abroad.' At the mention of the word *battle*, the blood rushed to Frank's face, conceiving that the 'murder was out'; but such was not the case. Contrary to expectation, the doctor did not *blab*, and the event of the fight never reached beyond the walls of the servants' hall of the Abbey, although it was widely spread among the surrounding villagers, who were loud in their praises of the young *Dares*.

Mr. Egerton, the tutor, was one of those old-fashioned clergymen of the church of England, once so highly looked up to by the people, but now supplanted, in too many instances, by a new-fashioned sort, who, by preaching for an hour or more on subjects which their hearers do not understand, and too often creating doubts which they cannot themselves remove, drive thousands from their churches to seek for instruction elsewhere.

He was old-fashioned enough to consider the true philosophy of life, as well as the duty of his profession, to consist in endeavouring to assuage the evils of human nature by any means, provided they war not against the soul. Fanaticism, with its long train of gloomy terrors, he left to those who practised it, and was inclined even to think, with Lord Shaftesbury, that gravity is too often but another word for imposture. He considered that we are entitled to enjoy the good things of this life when honestly procured, and that it were the height of ingratitude not to taste with satisfaction the liberal bounty of Providence. All he insisted upon was—that when our wishes are gratified, and the cup of fortune full, we should not drink it to the dregs.

Having said this, it is almost needless to add, that Mr. Egerton entered fully into the pleasures and amusements of Amstead Abbey, to the society of which, by his many agreeable accomplishments, he was no small acquisition. There was, however, one species of amusement in which he did not often participate; he rarely hunted, not that he thought it unbecoming his clerical situation, but because he was so bad a horseman that he feared he might break his neck. Neither

was he ever seen with a gun in his hand, the reason for which was a ludicrous one. On being asked by a visitor to Mr. Raby, why he did not join the shooting party of that morning, he accounted for it in the following words:—'I was once,' said he, 'inclined to the sport of the gun, but a circumstance that had nearly been attended with consequences which would have rendered me miserable for life, determined me to abandon it. My sight is imperfect; that is to say, I am, what is called, near-sighted; and being once in a wood with my gun, I espied what I took to be a fine full-grown black rabbit, under a furze-bush. I fired at, and, thank God, missed it, for it proved to be the head of the most intimate friend of my youth, who had laid himself at full length on the ground, to enable him to get a shot at a hare. The shock to my nerves was so great, that, to this day, the report of a gun brings instantly to my mind the head of my friend under the furze-bush.'

Although no sportsman, as far as horses and guns were concerned, Mr. Egerton had other ways of amusing himself abroad. He was an excellent fisherman, considering the disciple of the angle, probably, as pursuing an apostolical recreation, which, I believe, Izaak Walton did before him. He was, also, a musician, playing beautifully on the violoncello and the flute. But his *summum bonum*, in the way of indoor amusement, was a rubber at whist, at which he was truly a *trump*. In fact, whoever got the parson for a partner, considered him worth one point in the game, and half a crown would now and then be ventured on the rubber, on the strength of his fine play. But, notwithstanding these recreations, in which Mr. Egerton freely indulged himself, at proper times and seasons, no man could have performed his two-fold duties more sedulously than he discharged his. In the preparation of his two pupils for Eton, he succeeded eminently, and in his calling, as curate of the parish, he gave universal satisfaction both in and out of church.

CHAPTER II

The first great step in the life of our 'Sportsman': he is entered to hare—The Chapter concludes with many choice Aphorisms concerning the Noble Science, and sundry anecdotes, worthy being recorded in letters of gold.

'WHAT is to be done to-morrow,' said Mr. Egerton to his pupils in the evening, 'as Lady Charlotte has asked for a holiday?' '*I* shall *hunt*,' exclaimed our hero, his eyes brightening with delight; and he was out of the room, to give orders for Rodney to have no water in the morning, before his brother had returned an answer to the question. '*I* shall walk to the rectory,' said Andrew; 'I promised the Miss Chapmans I would bring them the books my uncle sent me last week from London, and they are very anxious to read them.' 'There is no disputing about tastes,' observed the tutor, addressing our young sportsman, on his return to the drawing-room, and hinting that he should not let Rodney give him another black eye, as nothing had so ungentlemanlike an appearance. 'Besides,' continued he, 'it savours of awkward horsemanship, in which, as you seem bent on being a fox-hunter, some day or another, you ought to endeavour to excel. Indeed, all gentlemen should ride well; and you will remember my telling you that, in the letters of Lord Chesterfield to his son, and of Lord Chatham to his nephew, it is insisted upon, as part of their education, to enable them to make a good appearance in the world, as Horace had insisted before them, in his advice to youth. You also remember my drawing your notice to several passages in history, in which the accomplishment of riding well is either pointed out, or boasted of, by still greater men. Hannibal, for example, is said to have differed in nothing in his appearance from the ordinary men of his day, unless in the peculiar neatness and elegance of his horses and their furniture, and likewise his seat in the saddle; and it was only yesterday that your brother was reading of Cicero, who, addressing his son Marcus, told him that, as the eyes of the world would be upon him, on account of his father's fame, he was delighted to hear that he

had received the praise of all the army for his excellence in riding.'

'I hunt with you to-morrow, papa,' said Frank to his father, as soon as he had made his escape from what he called 'Egerton's botheration about Hannibal and Cicero.' 'I hope we shall find as good a buck hare as that which Mr. Gibbon's shepherd soho'd for us the last time we met at the same place.' 'Frank,' said Mr. Raby, 'I must now be your tutor, and, in this instance, can do more for you than Mr. Egerton. You have made use of two terms not used in hare-hunting, and it becomes every person to adapt their language to their subject. A male hare, in hunting, is called a jack hare; and the word *tan-ta-ra*, not *soho*, denotes one espied in its form. The terms you have applied are peculiar to coursing.'

About a mile from the place of meeting Frank overtakes the hounds, and the following interesting colloquy occurs:—

Huntsman (touching his cap).—'Good morning, Master Francis; glad to see you out, sir. Rodney looks in high feather; you'll beat us all to-day.'

Frank.—'No, Dick; there is no beating you on old Clod-hopper, with his ugly lop ears. How you set them all the last time, over the Barnsly brook!'

Dick (smiling).—'Well, sir; but you saw a good deal of the run; now can you give us any account of it? for I sadly want to make *you* a sportsman. As for Master Raby, it's no use thinking of him: he's so terribly fond of books, flowers, pictures, and such like trumpery that he takes no delight in field sports. Then, again, that tutor does him no good, making him believe that he is to be a great scholard and a parliament man at last. For my part, I don't like those parliament gentlemen. I lived with one once; and just as the best part of the hunting began—about a month after Christmas, when we had such large fields that I sometimes got a hat full of half-crowns after a good run—away he went to parliament, and away went half my field as well.'

Frank.—'I had rather be a master of foxhounds, than member for the county, Dick—would not you? And, Dick, why does not papa keep foxhounds instead of the harriers? They tell me that six more horses, and a few more couples of hounds than he now has, would do; and I am sure you could hunt fox as well as you do hare.'

Dick.—'Your papa will never keep foxhounds, sir. He is the best master of harriers this day in England, but don't take delight in fox-hunting. Then, again, sir, you are wrong about thinking I could hunt fox as well as I do hare. When you turns fox-hunter, which no doubt you will do when you gets to the University, you'll see there is a great difference in the systems pursued with foxhounds and harriers; and that which is good in one, is bad in another, although not to the extent that some people thinks. I happened to overhear one of our gentlemen telling how Dick Knight lost his fox the other day with the Pytchley hounds—"at least," said he, "so thought Mr. Alcock." "Mr. Alcock," said one of them, "what does that old *thistle-whipper* know about hunting?" Now that is going too far; for, in my opinion, an old thistle-whipper must know a great deal more of hunting than a young fox-hunter is likely to do. But, Master Francis, can you give me any account of the last run you saw, in which there was a good deal to notice?'

Frank.—'Why, you know, Dick, I was behind a bit at starting, because I could not go fast enough the first ten minutes; but I said to myself, I shouldn't wonder if they come to a check at that large flock of sheep on the turnips, which they did, and I then got up to you. But I think I should have been with you all the way had it not been for that nasty oak stile, which my father would not let me ride at, and took me out of the line to a gate. I am certain Rodney would have cleared it, for I rode him over a higher than that, one day, after you, on Carpenter, when papa was not out—but I was deuced nearly off, Dick.'

Dick.—'Don't ride at timber, Master Francis—you are too young for that yet; and, if you get a *squeezer* at it, it may daunt you. I have had some terrible falls over timber, and was twice picked up for dead.'

Frank.—'But about the run! I saw how you hit off your hare, when the hounds were checked by the sheep. You stood stock-still whilst the hounds made their cast; but finding that neither Bellman, Bounty, nor Tyrant give tongue, and that some of the others had their noses off the ground, you gave a blast with your horn, made something like a circle in a trot, when old Bounty hit off the scent, and we went on.'

Dick.—'It was Bellman, Master Francis; but the brother and sister are so alike, that I scarcely know one from t'other

myself. That is not a bad hit of yours, however, sir. *You'll do in time.*'

Frank.—'But, Dick, what a head they carried over Groseby field. As the leaps were not too much for Rodney, I was pretty near you—was I not, Will? (addressing himself to the whipper-in). And I saw that young bitch, Melody, that papa is so fond of, guiding the scent for at least half a mile. He declares he would not take ten pounds for her.'

Dick.—'I would not take half that sum for her myself, sir. She is by the old Duke of Grafton's Tyrant, out of our old Melody, and has all the good qualities of a foxhound with those of the harrier. But, Master Francis, who told you about a hound "guiding the *scent*"? It's a monstrous good notion, but we always say "guiding the *pack*."'

Frank.—'It is what Mr. Egerton calls "a figure of speech," Dick.'

Dick.—'Ah! sir, see what it is not to have a larning! I shall never talk again about a hound guiding the pack, as I am all for a bit of novelty in my trade when I can get it. And I see no reason why hare-hunting should remain where my grandfather left it, when, as Squire Talbot says, the hares never went out of their own parishes.'

Frank.—'Mr. Egerton says there has been a great deal written about hunting hares, which I shall know when I come to read Greek. One Xenophon, he says, wrote about it more than two thousand years ago; and another Greek writer, called Homer, compared hounds running a hare through thick woods, to two great warriors pursuing an enemy by night.'

Dick.—'I don't doubt it, sir. That Mr. Egerton is a clever gentleman; I wish he would come a-hunting, as, perhaps, he might write something about it, for I don't know of any one having done so since the gentlemen you have just mentioned, and it is but a few that could read what they have said.'

Our hero was on the point of joining with the huntsman in the wish that his tutor would take the field, when Mr. Raby and the rest of the party came up, and orders were given to draw for a hare, in a fallow adjoining the road, which having been long ploughed, was considered likely to produce one. It did so; a brilliant burst was the result; and, at the end of thirty-two minutes, Dick had her in his hand, as stiff as if she had been six years in a museum. Another run followed, in

which some fine hunting was displayed; and Mr. Raby and his friends returned to the Abbey, well satisfied with their sport, and with a good appetite for their dinner.

During the interval between the two runs, which was not a very short one—for hares were not abundant in those days—Frank was seen in earnest conversation with a well-mounted gentleman, a stranger to Mr. Raby and his friends, who attracted every one's notice by the masterly manner in which he rode, and the attention he paid to the hunting of this celebrated pack of harriers. 'I have hunted in all our best counties,' said he to his friend, and this in the hearing of our young sportsman, 'and chiefly in the crack county of all—in Leicestershire; but I never saw more beautiful hunting than these hounds have this day shown. I have not only admired them when in difficulties, in which I must say they were ably assisted by their huntsman, but the head they carried in chase surprised me; surely Mr. Raby must breed a great number of hounds, to be able to top and tail them to their present perfection; for there does not appear to be half an inch of difference in their height, nor more than a yard or two in speed. Then what beautifully formed animals they are, and how light yet musical are their tongues: in fact, how unlike the heavy, throaty, long-eared, bow-wowing brutes that I have seen in other countries. I really think that if I lived near them,—devoted as I have been all my life to foxhounds, and prone to despise harriers,—I should hunt with them at least once a week.'

These were honeyed words to the ears of Frank Raby, who repeated them with much delight to his father on their road home; and it was also in his power to inform him where this *lion*, in his eyes, was domiciled, which happened to be at the mansion of an intimate, but non-hunting friend. 'Ah!' said Mr. Raby on the last-named circumstance being made known to him, 'then we shall see him at the Abbey on Saturday, if he remains so long on his visit to Sir William, as the baronet and his party dine with us on that day.' 'Oh! papa,' observed Frank, 'how glad I am to know that! we shall hear all about Leicestershire hunting, which is the best in all the world, I believe; but will you promise not to begin upon it with him until we come in to dessert?' Mr. Raby smiled, and said nothing; but doubtless his heart responded to the call of his favourite son.

Bagging the badger.

THE LIFE OF A SPORTSMAN

One of the leading characteristics of a young sportsman is the pursuit of all animals which come under the denomination of vermin; and, indeed, for the preservation of game, poultry, and many other things, the destruction of them, as of many of the feathered race, is necessary. There is, however, one animal included in this list, which, as far as the evils of his ways are taken into account, is entitled to an exemption, for they are few, if any. This animal is the badger, neither a depredator nor a thief; but subsisting chiefly on pig nuts, beech mast, and roots; in fact, on anything that pigs eat in the woods; and, moreover, of service to the sportsman, by drawing earths for foxes, although he sometimes, by making them too strong, increases the expense of stopping. The badger, however, possesses two very extraordinary properties —the prodigious strength of his nose in burrowing, and the ferocity with which he defends himself when attacked by dogs. Drawing badgers from their burrows is one test of courage, or pluck, in terriers, and dogs of that description, for which purpose many are kept, to the discredit of those who keep them.

'What have you been doing to-day, Francis?' inquired Mr. Egerton, on the morrow after the hare-hunt. 'I saw you coming to the house with Jem Perren, who was carrying something in a bag.' 'We had been drawing a badger, sir, in the big wood, and you would have been pleased to see how well Pickle and Vixen behaved.' 'Indeed,' replied Mr. Egerton, 'I should not. It would have afforded me no pleasure to have seen animals tormenting each other for your pleasure, and merely that you might get possession of a worthless, though harmless creature.' 'Not worthless, sir,' resumed Frank; 'we mean to have a burrow made for him to enter the young terriers at him, for Jem Perren thinks those out of Trinket are not thorough-bred by the father's side.' 'Indeed, Francis,' exclaimed the tutor, 'you shall do no such thing; at least with my knowledge. You have signalised yourself, in your own estimation, by having drawn a wild badger from his burrow, which, no doubt, you think much of; but let once doing so suffice. I shall walk with you to-morrow to the big wood, and see you replace the poor animal in his burrow.'

In the hilarity of youthful spirits, this interference had no further effect on our young sportsman than to damp his ardour,

for the moment, in a pursuit in which he had just commenced with such success, and he walked away with a somewhat sullen step, to communicate the sad tidings to Jem Perren. 'Bless me,' said Jem; 'I wish that parson was in the place he talks so much about in church; he'll be the ruin of you, Master Francis. I heard my father say, the other day, that he scolded him for shooting jays, although the gardener says they play the deuce with the raspberries and cherries, and you know my father wants the feathers for fly-fishing.' 'Ay,' resumed Frank; 'but never mind, Jem; we go to Eton after midsummer, and then we can get rid of his botheration, and shall be our own masters in the holidays.'

Saturday arrived: and the family at the Grange came to the Abbey to dinner, and, with them, the 'lion' out of Leicestershire, whose name was Somerby, from whose conversation with his father Frank Raby anticipated a great treat. Neither was it short of a treat to the father himself, to contribute to the delight of his favourite son, and, according to promise, he waited his coming to dessert before the subject of hunting in Leicestershire commenced. We will give it in detail.

Mr. Raby.—'Were I a fox-hunter, Mr. Somerby, I should envy you who make Leicestershire your domicile.'

Mr. Somerby.—'It is, without doubt, the county of all others in which a man may get the most hunting.'

Mr. Raby.—'And the best.'

Mr. Somerby.—'That depends on circumstances. It is a mistaken notion that a good country alone can make good hounds, or that Leicestershire has that peculiar privilege.'

Mr. Raby.—'I always thought that Leicestershire was a county in which hounds had less difficulty to encounter than in any other; and that with a good scent, you are almost sure to have sport, even if you do not kill your fox. By the term "Leicestershire," I mean the whole extent of country within reach of Melton Mowbray.'

Mr. Somerby.—'You have been misinformed on these subjects, Mr. Raby. It is true there are extensive tracts in the counties of Leicester, Rutland, and Northampton, extremely favourable to hounds, from the great prevalence of land which has been under grass beyond the memory of man; as, likewise, from the prevalence of large enclosures, which often contain forty acres,

and occasionally double that number; but here exists one difficulty. Headlands and hedgerows are friends to huntsmen when their hounds are off the scent: indeed, they may be said then to act as guide-posts; but let hounds throw up in the middle of a fifty-acre piece, and require their huntsmen to direct them, their guide-post is not so readily at his hand as in counties where the enclosures are much smaller. Should he fail to find the chase on one side of his ground, having, of course, ascertained that it is not on ahead, he has a long way to travel for it to the other, whilst his fox is taking advantage of the delay, and making the best of his road to his point. Then, again, another circumstance operates against hounds in these champaign counties, which is peculiar to them. From the luxuriance of the herbage in summer, enough remains in winter to maintain store stock; and herds of cattle and flocks of sheep abound in them. Scarcely a run is seen in which hounds are not brought to check, from encountering one or other of those obstacles; and, although not generally so considered, the stain from cattle is worse than that from sheep. Cattle are also more perplexing on another account; sheep will stand still and confront hounds; but cattle will keep going on, to the great disturbance of hounds in their work, and often on the very line of scent. Then, again, there is much variety of *staple* in the land of the counties of which we are now speaking. It is frequently our lot to commence a run in a fine champaign grazing country, extremely favourable to hounds—and to finish it over cold ploughed land, incapable of holding a scent beyond a passing moment—this, too, at a time when every advantage is required. We have likewise, occasionally, a great many horsemen in the field, some of whom think more of riding than of hunting, and press on hounds at the most difficult points of the chase.'

Mr. Raby.—'But Sir William informs me you have had a capital season's sport up to this period.'

Mr. Somerby.—'Why, Mr. Raby, notwithstanding these difficulties, no country under the sun shows such fine runs as that called Leicestershire does; nor such exquisite enjoyment of them, for the peculiar nature and disposition of it. Indeed, a friend of mine says that the very act of riding to cover over Leicestershire, on a hunter, is nearly equal to following hounds in a run over a great many of the provincial countries. But

that I should have had a good season's sport up to this period, and especially as the weather has been so favourable to it, is not in the least to be wondered at, when I say that I have generally hunted with the hounds *of the first sportsman that England has hitherto seen.*'

Mr. Raby.—'Of course you mean Mr. Meynell, who hunts what is called the Quorndon, or Quorn country, whom I have heard so much of, but never had the pleasure of seeing. Perhaps you will favour me with a description of his person and character, which, as I understand you have long enjoyed his friendship and confidence, you must be well qualified to do; but, in the meantime, if you please, we will drink "Success to fox-hunting," in a bumper. Although no fox-hunter myself, I heartily wish it success. It is a manly, fine exercise, affording health to the body, and much matter for a contemplative mind. In few situations of life, indeed, are the faculties of man more prominently displayed. Fortitude, good sense, and collectiveness of mind, have in it a wide field of action, and a sensible sportsman would be a respectable character in any grade of life.'

Mr. Somerby.—'You have not over-rated the good properties of fox-hunting, and allow me to add to your panegyric upon it. In the first place, where will you find better society than by a cover-side in Leicestershire, and numerous other counties? In the next, it links all classes together, from the peer to the peasant. Then, again, *it is the Englishman's peculiar privilege.* It is not to be found in any other part of the globe, but in England's true land of liberty—and may it flourish to the end of time! "*Success to fox-hunting,*" I say, with all my heart, and will now comply with your request:—

'Mr. Meynell is of the middle height, of a compact and well-proportioned form; with a highly expressive countenance, and a very intellectual eye. His manners and general deportment are those of a man of the highest fashion, and he combines zeal with talent, which would render him distinguished in any pursuit that might be congenial to his inclination and taste. Fortunately for fox-hunting, he made that his election, and although I hope he has not yet seen half his days, he has done more for the improvement of the science of the chase than any other man. In fact, his opinions have already become maxims, amongst which are the following:—

'"Hounds," he says, "should combine strength with beauty, and steadiness with high mettle.

'"Perfection of shape consists in short backs, open bosoms, straight legs, and compact feet.

'"The first qualities of hounds are fine noses, docile tempers, steadiness to their game, and stoutness in chase.

'"If flagrant propensities discover themselves in a young hound, hang him at once.

'"Walk your hounds amongst riot (*i.e.* hares and deer) in the summer, and hunt the woodlands, in which foxes are plenty, at least two months before the regular season begins.

'"Perfection in hounds in chase lies in their hard running with a good scent, and patient hunting with a bad one, together with invincible stoutness, when called for.

'"The greatest faults are skirting, over-running the scent, and babbling. Never breed from a hound that quits the line in chase, however good in all other respects. The fault will surely descend to his or her produce.

'"Do not lift your hounds when they are at fault, until you are satisfied that they require it; but encourage them to take pains; and keep your field aloof, so that the steam from the horses may not destroy the scent. Let them be cast in two lots—the head whipper-in taking hold of one, and the huntsman of the other.

'"When a fox breaks cover, avoid too much hallooing; it makes hounds wild, and often mars sport.

'"The more quietly whippers-in turn hounds, the better; if they are too free with their rating and their whips, hounds will not turn as short as they should do, from fear of the lash.

'"When the hounds are going to cry, let them be *encouraged*, not *driven* to do so, if it can be avoided. If a hound will not go readily to cry, he had better be drafted at once. It is essential to sport that hounds should get *quickly* to cry, or a good head cannot be carried by then in the burst, which renders it imperfect, notwithstanding the pace may be good.

'"If a fox hangs long in cover, leave him, rather than mob him to death. He may have a reason for doing so, which he will sooner die for, than forego; and he may show good sport at another time.

'"Do not think too much about killing foxes, or of '*blood*,' as the term is. The wildest pack of hounds have been known

to kill most foxes, by skirting and meeting them in covers; whilst they have seldom killed a really good fox in a straightforward run. Murdering foxes in covers is an absurd practice. Seasoned foxes are as essential to sport as seasoned hounds.

'"When once you have established a pack of foxhounds,—*which it requires ten years to do*,—be cautious of admitting strangers from other packs amongst them *during the season*. Hounds should be well acquainted with each other, for they look to each other in difficulties, beyond what may generally be imagined. Hounds are jealous to a degree; and many, naturally steady, will be induced to run riot by one bad example, especially if exhibited by a stranger. In short, one faulty hound, as one injudicious rider, may defeat the most promising prospect of sport."

'Mr. Meynell,' continued Mr. Somerby, 'is eminently qualified to be at the head of such a country as the Quorn, by the command he has acquired over his field, owing to the respect paid to his character as a sportsman. He is often heard to address them thus:—

'"Nothing gives me more pleasure, gentlemen, than seeing my hounds afford you good sport; and nothing more pain, than your marring it by over-riding them. That, generally, proceeds from jealousy, which true sportsmen should be superior to; for if you are near enough to see hounds do their work, you ought to be satisfied with your place, and care not who goes first. Again, you should keep your eye on the *body* of the hounds, instead of depending on two or three which are leading; and you should always anticipate a check, which sheep, cattle, teams at plough, arable land, or a road, are all likely to produce. Remember that every check gives your fox an advantage over hounds, and that scent is of a fleeting nature, soon lost—never again to be recovered."

'Mr. Meynell is a bold and superior horseman. In fact, no practicable fence will stop him, when his hounds are running; but he takes no unnecessary liberties with his horses. His language to his hounds is at once emphatic and distinct, as well as cheerful and musical in the extreme. His scream, or view-halloo, is, indeed, wonderful, thrilling through the heart and nerves of all who are within hearing of it. He is as great a favourite with the farmers, as he is popular among his

equals; and he has secured the esteem of the former by the following praiseworthy conduct:—Although he is very punctual to his time of throwing off, and would not wait more than ten minutes for a duke, he will wait twenty for some graziers, whose horses he sees at the cover-side, when he knows there is a cattle-fair in the neighbourhood, at which their presence is required. He here shows that acuteness and right judgment which are conspicuous throughout his entire character, and have led to the eminence he has attained, as the master of a pack of foxhounds in the finest country in England.'

Mr. Raby.—'I am delighted with your description of this fine sportsman; will you favour me with some account of his establishment?'—a question suggested by *Frank*, who whispered in his father's ear that he should like to know the name of Mr. Meynell's huntsman.

Mr. Somerby.—'With the greatest pleasure. I shall not feel weary of recapitulating scenes and circumstances which have been, and I hope will continue to be, the source of the chief pleasure of my life. Mr. Meynell has two packs of hounds; one called the young, and the other the old pack; the latter consisting of hounds of three years old and upwards, none of two years old being admitted into it, unless a very high opinion be entertained of their steadiness and abilities. The young pack are hunted twice a week, in woodlands as much as possible, and in the least popular covers, having a few steady old hounds to assist them; and it is to the old pack that the best parts of the county are assigned, in which they meet four days in the week, when the weather permits.

'The name of Mr. Meynell's huntsman is John Raven, a man of good parts, and of peculiarly sportsmanlike appearance. He has the eye of a hawk, the voice of a stentor, is a good sportsman, and not to be excelled in horsemanship. (At these words Frank's eye glistened, and he was heard to heave a sigh—as much as to say, How I should like to see that man!) His two whippers-in are equally effective with himself; but, strange to say, one of them (Jones) has but one leg, having suffered amputation for a white swelling, and the loss is supplied by cork.'

Mr. Raby.—'What a game man must Jones be! I have often wondered, Mr. Somerby, that Mr. Meynell should reside at Quorndon Hall, as I see, by the map, that it is situated

quite at the outside of the most open and best part of the county. I conclude, however, that it is, as a residence for a master of foxhounds, in every respect complete.'

Mr. Somerby.—'Quorndon Hall, as a house, although pleasantly situated, on the bank of the river Soar, which runs partially through the grounds, has no pretension beyond the rank of country gentlemen's houses in general; neither is it upon a large scale. Its situation, also, is not central; but it has one advantage, which Mr. Meynell thinks much of. It is within easy reach of the forest of Charnwood, which affords excellent opportunities for making young hounds, as well as of cub-hunting, in the autumn, with the old ones. That forest abounds with foxes—is good scenting ground; and we hunt there long after the good country is shut up;—in fact, until May-day, at which period of the year it is desirable, for more reasons than one, that hounds should not have far to travel to cover. Mr. Meynell is, therefore, partial to Quorndon as a residence; and he has a temporary kennel in the Market Harborough country, in which his hounds lie, when the fixture is in that quarter.'

Mr. Raby.—'You are, I conclude, domiciled at Melton Mowbray. All I know of that town is, from having once passed through it, on my road to the north of England; but I did not get out of my carriage. It appeared to be but an insignificant place.'

Mr. Somerby.—'And it is so; it possesses but one inn, and that a very bad one; no bank, and very few good houses. But it is well situated for a sportsman, during his residence in the county; as almost every good cover in Mr. Meynell's, as well as in the other hunts, is to be got at from it; and, weather permitting, no man need remain idle in Melton from want of being able to reach hounds.'

Mr. Raby.—'Do you hunt every day?'

Mr. Somerby.—'I do.'

Mr. Raby.—'Is not the fatigue of hunting six days in the week more than the generality of constitutions will bear without injury?'

Mr. Somerby.—'I think not. On the contrary, it is my opinion, that any man, under the age of fifty-five, whose frame is naturally sound, who lives temperately as to wine, and who will allow himself eight hours' bed, will be better in health for

such severe exercise. It will render him superior to fatigue, and, barring accidents and epidemics, superior also to disease.'

Mr. Raby.—'But, Mr. Somerby, I am at a loss to know how you get over such fences as I saw in the country between Harborough and Melton; many of them appeared impracticable, or "stoppers," as I am told they are called in the fox-hunting world.'

Mr. Somerby.—'Why, in the language of one of the oldest sportsmen, and hardest riders, in the Belvoir Hunt, *we send our hearts over first and then follow them in the best way we can.*'

Mr. Raby.—'You must get many falls, every year.'

Mr. Somerby.—'Of course we do; but we think nothing of falls. Show me the man who says he never gets them, and I will tell him he seldom sees hounds—at least *few good runs*; and this in any country. But, to quote another of our best men (*singulus in arte*, I was going to say), "Falls go for nothing, provided you don't let go your horse; but a man looks very small, running across a field, in a red coat, booted and spurred, crying out, *Stop my horse!—pray, sir, stop my horse!*" The answer generally is, "It would be a pity to stop him, sir—he is going so beautifully."'

Mr. Raby.—'I am really ashamed of catechising you thus, but the fact is, exclusive of the pleasure I myself derive from your description, this second boy of mine, whom you saw the other day with my harriers, has a great wish to become a fox-hunter. Let us fill our glasses, drink a bumper to Mr. Meynell and "*the Noble Science*," and then, perhaps, you will have the kindness to give us a short account of a run with his hounds.'

Mr. Somerby.—'I will with pleasure comply with your request; more especially as it is joined in by my young friend there, whose attention to the hunting of your excellent harriers very forcibly struck me. But he must not think lightly of hare-hunting; Mr. Meynell enters all his young hounds to *hare*, although he expects them to be steady to fox afterwards; which will, no doubt, be the case with your promising son. I know not, then, that I can do better than relate the particulars of the very last run I saw with Mr. Meynell's hounds, rendered more than commonly interesting, perhaps, by the part I myself performed in it:—

'It was a beautiful morning for scent—at least, so it

appeared, and, for once, it kept its promise; but I thought it would be a scenting day, for I observed the clouds were stationary above, and all was clear below, with no *sun*; the barometer was also rising. We had a large field, it being a favourite fixture; and as I had the luck to tally-ho the fox away, I, of course, got a good start. It happened, however, that I this day rode a five-year-old horse, the only one in my stable; for that tender age agrees not with our shire. I had never had a taste of him before; but my groom had, and assured me he would make a trump. "He is as quick as lightning," said he, "and he will face anything; but his temper, as you know, sir, is none of the best. I would advise you, when you can, to take a line of your own."

'Our first fence was a flight of rails, with a yawning ditch on the further side, which I thought it was my luck to have the first fly at; but, looking earnestly at the hounds,—as every man should do, whether on a young one or an old one,—I never saw parson Thompson, who came right across me at the fence, and got a nasty sort of a fall. (By the bye, he told me, afterwards, he "could not stop the old mare, she was so d—d fresh": if so, all well; if not, served his reverence right.) I tried to stop the young thorough-bred one; but he threw up his head, and it was "*no go*"; so, thinking my own the most precious life of the two,—I mean, of more value to me than parson Thompson's,—I let him go; and all I saw, when up in the air, was the old mare's belly and his reverence's head, the rest of his body being under his mare. However, I never touched him, I am happy to say; and two others, besides myself, did as I did; but the third was not *quite* so fortunate. He jumped, as he thought, on the parson's head; but, as luck would have it, it was only his hat, as his head had just that moment slipped out of it. You are aware, Mr. Raby, these things will happen in our very fast country, and are thought little of; although it is no joke to get a fall at the first fence, with such a crowd behind you, each man trying to be in front, and all as jealous as newly-married women at a ball. However, I kept my line; and, if I remember right, the next fence was nothing—*only* a gate, a stiff one, to be sure; but young ones are always good at timber—that is to say, if they will but look at it.

'Now the pace soon began to *tell*; for the country rode

infernally deep, and there was no getting a nick by a turn, as the fox went straight on end. There were not more than eight or ten of the field very near to the hounds, and no one exactly on their line. In fact, I saw plainly how things were going. Puggy was facing the cream of the country, and I said to myself, "*We are in for a tickler.*"

'I began to be sorry, however, that I was riding my five-year-old; indeed, I meant to have had him as my second horse, and I must say my groom advised me to do so. However, there was nothing to be done, now, but to let him go; and as I only gave two hundred for him, at Newmarket, I thought I might try what he was made of at once. You know, Mr. Raby, it's no use keeping horses at Melton merely to look at; consequently, if they are good for nothing, we send them at once to the hammer. We let them try their luck in the *provincials*, when they cannot live over the grass.

'The next fence was a bullfinch, as black as'—(Here Mr. Somerby was interrupted by Frank asking his father what was meant by a 'bullfinch fence'; but his father was unable to answer the question)—'The next fence,' resumed Mr. Somerby, 'was a bullfinch fence, as black and as dark as the shades below: you could not, indeed, have seen through it with a lantern. Then as to what there might be on the other side, Heaven knew, but I did not. I only guessed there was a yawning ditch, and very likely a stiff rail to boot. But what was to be done? The hounds were going the top of the pace—no time to turn to the right or to the left; two fellows nearer to them than I was (didn't like that, you know, Francis, eh?) and Cecil Forester, close behind me, roaring out, "Go along, sir, for God's sake!"—so at it I went. It was a rasper ("a *rasper!*" exclaimed Frank, but only in hearing of his father), surely, and I cannot say I was sorry when I found myself well landed in the next field. Our party was now becoming select. There were only five of us right well with the hounds; and although many were near, some were already beaten, and some *nowhere*. But, to be sure, the pace was awful. "Sharper than common, this morning," cried George Germaine to me, and he seldom sings out, as you know, on that score; "how does the young one like it?" Indeed, he has been heard to say, during the Bibury meeting, that a race-horse never yet went fast enough to please him; and that,

if it would not hurt him, he would like to be shot out of a cannon's mouth. Albeit, there was no cause for complaint now; still my horse appeared to be going at his ease; in short, he delighted me. I said to myself, "*You are worth double what I gave for you.*" He jumped an ox-fence (Frank here again looked surprised), the next but one after the bullfinch, and then a stile, with an awkward foot-bridge. A widish brook he, of course, took in his stride—for all young ones will leap brooks, if the riders will only let them go their own pace at them; so I did not think much of that; but I could not help saying to myself,—for there was no one very near to have heard me,—"*I have got a trump,* I believe; the blood of Herod will tell." Still he kept shaking his head in an extraordinary manner; I had never seen him do so before. If I had had my whip in my hand, I should have given him a "*nobber*"; for, you know, it's awkward work going very fast at high and strong timber—post and rail, or what not—with a blind ditch on the rising side, and your horse shaking his head like a terrier killing a rat. I could not do this, however; for I had lost my whip, and part of my breeches as well, at that infernal bullfinch. I know not how it happened, but that day I was not in leathers; for John Hawkes and myself always ride in leathers, though people say "it looks *slow.*" I suppose Pritchard thinks corduroys less trouble; for he often says, when he wakes me, "Likely to be wet, sir; better not wear leathers to-day." (The washerwoman polishes the corduroys, and he cleans the leathers.) To proceed with my story. When we checked for a minute or two under Carlton Clumps, I found what it was that made the young one shake his head. He had got a thorn in one cheek, out of that infernal bullfinch, and the blood was streaming down the other, from a rip from one of the growers in it. I got the thorn out the best way I could; but my horse was evidently in much pain. What was to be done? I could have cried; for I love horses better than most things, and abhor cruelty in any shape. I condemned myself; I wished I was anywhere but where I was, and said to myself, "What could have possessed me to ride Brilliant to-day, when I have nine seasoned hunters, all sound, in my stable, and every one fit to go; and Griffiths, my groom, told me I had better not?" "I'll go home," I said; but, confound it, at that very moment, Champion and Statesman hit off the

"You are worth double what I gave for you."

" You are worth double what I gave for you."

scent; Meynell took off his cap, and gave a scream; and what could I do? What would *you* have done? The young thorough-bred one had recovered his wind; and, as he shook his head less, and played cheerfully with his bit, I hoped he was in less pain. He was carrying me magnificently—not more than a dozen of us with the hounds; a splendid country before us—I took the lead again.' (Here Frank heaved another sigh, and became restless.)

'I shall never forget,' continued Mr. Somerby, 'the third fence we now came to, which was out of the next field but one to Shankton Holt cover. It was not a *double* but a *treble*. It was of this description;—thank Heaven! there are not more than three or four of such in most runs;—first, a ditch; then a rail; then another ditch; and then another rail. You see there is no landing for a horse, if he takes fences of this sort at twice, except *on* the first rail, or *in* the second ditch; but the old ones *will* double them, when very well handled by their riders.

'Now the wind was well in Brilliant, and I had found he would face anything; but I doubted his being up to this queer *double*, or "*treble*," as I have called it. I sent him at it, then, at the rate of twenty miles an hour, thinking to take it all at a fly; but far as the clever young horse flung himself, he could not clear the whole. He alighted with one fore-leg *over*, and the other *under*, the outermost rail, and gave me a thundering fall. "It 's unfortunate," said I to myself, glancing my eye at the fence, as I arose from the ground; "if I had known that that middle rail had been so weak, we would have gone "in and out clever," as Cholmondeley says; "at least, we should have got over with a scramble. I am out of luck to-day," added I; "but here goes again," and soon jumped into my saddle.

'The hounds having turned towards me a little, I was very soon in my place again. "What now?" said one. "Disasters come thickly this morning," cried another. "*All right* again," replied I; "take care of yourselves, for we are in for business to-day; and I perceive one or two of you have been paying your respects to Mother Earth. Don't halloo till you are out of the wood, my boys."

'The scent appeared to get better and better;—indeed, the pace had been awful since the check in the windmill piece.

I looked back twice, and could only see four of the field in our rear, and there were but five besides myself well with the hounds. "This is beautiful," I said: "*Divine!*" shouted John Hawkes. "Indeed it is, sir," said Wing, the grazier, going in his usual place. I thought so too. I could not help giving them a cheer, which I don't often do, and got a rebuke for my pains. "Leave 'em alone, sir," exclaimed Meynell; "they cannot be doing it better; I'll bet a thousand on my hounds, if you will not over-ride them." Ten minutes more, however, began to tell tales. One of the best nags out of Melton was about to look queer,—and so did his owner too, for he had been just saying he could go for another hour. It is true he had rammed him along at a devil of a rate, and he rides with rather too slack a rein. "Never loose their heads, my boy, whatever you do," said my old uncle to me, soon after I was breeched: and no man's advice was better than his. He was one of the best of his day; but still I think he would be called "*slow*" now.

'But to continue our run. We crossed the brook under Norton-by-Galby, and went as straight as a line for Rolleston-wood, Forester and Lambton being the first over it, and my young one following in the very foot-holes of their horses. "Ha! ha!" said I to myself, as we rose the hill in Galby-field, which, by the bye, being deep and stiff, took rather tight hold of the nags—"another ox-fence, and most likely another fall." —"I'll *not* have this ox-fence," said I; "they are turning to the right, and I'll make for yonder sheep-pen in the corner." But there was no such luck for me, or my horse. "It is as fast as a jail-door," said Loraine Smith, who was trying to open the gate; "and there is not room to jump into and out of it." What was to be done? The hounds were going with a burning scent, and appeared to be bearing away to the left. "Here goes, then," said I; "there is nothing else for it"; so catching fast hold of the young one's head, I sent him manfully at the ox-fence; but it had like to have been *a case*. The ditch was broad and deep (Frank was here observed to listen most attentively, with the hope, no doubt, of being better acquainted with the nature and character of this ox-fence), the hedge thick and plashed, and the rail beyond them strong. Neither was this all. There was a considerable fall, or *drop*, into the next field, which would have been bad enough had my horse

landed himself on the ridge; but, unfortunately for us both, he alighted in the furrow, which was deep and sticky. The drop must have been six feet, at the least, and he had a hard struggle to keep his legs, for he must have cleared more than seven yards in length, or he would not have got over it at all. *It told upon him*; but I soon got him upon a headland, and, standing up in my stirrups, took a good pull at his head, which recovered him wonderfully, before he got to the end of the ground, which was sixty acres or more; but you know, Mr. Raby, the thorough-bred ones will do this. In short, he cleared a high gate into the Uppingham and Leicester road, a little to the right of Billesden, and a large, straggling, blackthorn hedge, and a ditch out of it, with apparent ease to himself, and greatly to my delight. "This cannot last long," I said. "I wish the fox would die, or that I had any horse in my stable save this; but Pug must go to ground in the Coplow, or, at least, we may come to a check in it." The devil a bit; he never went into the Coplow at all, but straight away, as if for Lozeby plantations. I shall kill the young one, thought I; but what could I do? We went right over Tilton field—the worst ground in the country for a tired one—and out of it I got another fall; but I believe it was my own fault. The fence was of this description,—it was plashed, *newly* plashed, with growers in it as thick as a man's leg; but (confound all Leicestershire hedgers and ditchers!) the brushwood leaned, uncut, towards me, over at least two yards of ground, and there was a wide ditch on the landing side. Brilliant was going gallantly at it, when, perhaps thinking I was upon Harkaway——'

Mr. Raby.—'Pardon me for interrupting you, Mr. Somerby, in your highly interesting and well-told description of this fine run; but allow me to ask why those who have such large studs of hunters at Melton do not always have two horses out each day, which would afford a chance to change in the course of the runs; at all events in many of them?'

Mr. Somerby.—'Your remark is an obvious one. A few of our hardest riders are inclined to do so, and I hope to live to see the plan generally adopted. The difficulty appears to exist in procuring fellows with brains in their heads to ride the second horses *properly*, so as to bring them up fresh. However, to proceed. Perhaps, thinking I was on Harkaway,

who is rather slack at his fences, or, more likely, fearing we might drop short, I rammed my spurs into the young one's sides, and he jumped further than he need have done. He kept his legs on landing, but the third step he took afterwards, his toe struck the top of one of those ant-hills with which that part of Leicestershire abounds, and down he went on his head. He rolled completely over me, and we lay on the ground together. He was up first, however—for I could neither stir hand nor foot; but it was only from the wind being knocked out of me, and in a very few minutes I caught him. Indeed, he was walking quietly away, with his back turned upon the hounds, having very little puff left in him; in other words, he appeared regularly pumped out. Nor did I like his appearance at all; it was anything but pleasing. His tail was shaking—his flanks worked violently—his nostrils were much distended: there was that glare of the eye, also, which horses exhibit when they are much overworked: and he staggered as I leaned my weight on the stirrup. I stood still for a moment, but could hear nothing. "It's all over," said I; "they have run away from me; I must go home"; and I patted the young one on the neck, saying, "Well, you have gone a good one," and walked him along a headland to a gate which led to a hard road. Here he struck into a trot, without being urged to it by me, which plainly showed he was recovering himself; and the bleeding from his cheek had ceased. "Hark!" said I; "surely I hear the hounds"; but Brilliant had heard them before me. From a trot he struck into a gallop, and I saw them about a mile ahead of me. "The fox will not long face this wind," said I; "I have a chance of dropping in with them yet. By Jove, they are coming round to me; he has turned short for Quenby. I shall catch them at Newton village. What a tickler the nags must have had over the Newton hills!"

'As I predicted, I fell in with them in a road a little beyond the village. There were eleven men with the hounds, and I made the twelfth; all the rest, as O'Kelly said, after one of Eclipse's races—"*nowhere.*" "Where have you been?" said one. "*Where I deserved* to have been," was my reply. "Are you hurt?" "No." But my horse! what state was he in? Why, I will tell you. The hard road had greatly recovered him and he leaped a widish place out of the lane, when the hounds crossed under his nose, as well as he could have leaped it in

" He's heart of oak ! "

the morning. "*He's heart of oak,*" said I; and I sent him at a flight of rails nearly as high as his back, which he cleared with apparent ease. In short, he appeared to be the freshest horse in the field; but he had had his puff, whilst the others were going over the Newton hills (remember, he was only a five-year-old). Distress was apparent in all; even Bernado began to refuse, which he never does till he is beat (Forester swears he never *was* but twice); and Meynell's grey looked very much like compounding. Germaine got fast in a sheep-pen; for although Melon jumped into it, he would not jump out; in short, the jump had left him, and we never saw him again. "Where's the best place?" cried Cholmondeley, who could not face some timber, and was looking for a *creep* through a bullfinch; he found it not, and we saw no more of him. "How shall we get over the brook?" holloaed Lockley, who would have jumped one twice as wide this morning, and thought nothing about it. "*Go quick at it,*" said I; and Brilliant went a yard beyond it. "Well done the five-year-old!" holloaed Martin Hawke, who was the next moment over head and ears in the water; his horse never rose at it at all.

'There were now only five of us with the hounds, and it began to be labour and sorrow with us all. As for Brilliant, it was all over with him. The flash in the pan had exploded —perhaps had been extinguished by the brook. Nevertheless, I am ashamed to say, I persevered with him, but I could scarcely lift him along;—he dragged his hind legs through the fences, and I could not make him rise. He was, in fact, twice down on his head in the space of a mile and a half, though we did not part company. In addition to this, with the finest mouth in the world, he leaned half his weight on my hand, and the hounds were leaving me apace. "I'll try him *once* more," said I to myself; so got him on a smooth headland (for ridge and furrow were destroying him), and sent him at a stile at the end of it. For the first time in his life he refused; I put him at it again, and I thought he was going to take it; but he had not the power to rise, and, swerving a little to the left, he ran his head into the hedge, and floundered on his knees on the bank. I jumped off him immediately, and thanked him for not giving me a fall. Now what a situation was I in! I could still see the hounds, and the five men going by their side. But I could only see them; I could no longer be with

them. Like King Richard, at Bosworth, what would I not have given for a horse!

'The sequel is now to come. The fox was killed about three miles farther on, after one of the finest and severest chases recorded, even in Leicestershire. But in what condition were myself and my horse? As for me, I was bruised and sore, and had dislocated my right thumb; I had also left my whip and a slice of my breeches in the bullfinch; but these were only trifles. I trembled for the fate of the five-year-old, and could not bear the sight of his wound. I looked for a village and could see none; but I saw the house of a Leicestershire grazier, and that was enough for me at the moment. I led Brilliant to his stable, and his hack conveyed me to Melton.

'"Richards," said I to my groom—and no man has a better—"send a helper off with this hack directly, and put yourself in the gig, without loss of time, with everything necessary for a tired and maimed horse, and leave him not till he is recovered; that is to say (for I had my fears), if he *does* recover. It was contrary to your advice that I rode Brilliant to-day; and, unfortunately for him, it has been the hardest run we have had the last three years."

'"It is a pity you rode him, sir," replied Richards, "whilst you had so many other horses quite fit to go. I think he will make the best hunter in your stable in another year or two. But *where shall I find him, sir?*" "At Mr. King's, near Hungerton," was my reply. "He has turned one of his own horses out of his best loose-box on purpose to make Brilliant comfortable." "And *where is he cut, sir!*" asked the anxious groom; "is it a bad over-reach, or have you staked him?" "I have done neither," I said; "get to him as quickly as you can, and you will see."

'I dined that evening at the old club in Melton, where there was a very pleasant party; and went afterwards to another house, where all sorts of fun was going on; but I could have no enjoyment; I thought only of my poor young horse. It is, however, time to finish my story. The following day was Sunday, and I told Pritchard not to call me till ten. However, I grew fidgety; so rang my bell at nine, and asked if there were any tidings from Hungerton? "Yes, sir," said Pritchard, "Richards and the helper returned home last

night, after you were gone to bed." "How was that?" I inquired. "*Brilliant was dead, sir, before they reached the house!*" "Shut the door," said I hastily, "and don't come near me till twelve." I had a good mind to have made a vow never to have hunted again.'[1]

At the conclusion, a dead silence was observed for a minute or two; it was first broken by Mr. Egerton, who had listened with the deepest attention. 'I suppose, Mr. Somerby,' he said, 'the scene you have been describing is one of unusual occurrence?'

'You mean the death of my horse?' replied Mr. Somerby.

'Not merely that,' resumed Mr. Egerton. 'It appears to me strange that the word sport, which means diversion, or pleasure, can be applied to the details of the day which you have so minutely described. Here were upwards of a hundred gentlemen assembled, at an immense expense, hoping, no doubt, to enjoy the diversion of hunting a fox; but, by your account, not a tenth part were able to partake of it; for not more than that number saw a hound after the first ten minutes; and those at prodigious peril to their lives, great suffering to their horses, and, in your own case, at the cost of a noble animal's life, and two hundred guineas as well.'

'You have hit my friend *hard*, Mr. Egerton,' observed Sir William. 'I shall listen anxiously to his defence.'

'You know we are no fox-hunters at Amstead, Mr. Somerby,' said Mr. Raby, wishing to put his visitor at his ease; 'we only *blow* our horses now and then with the harriers; and my reverend friend there has never even gone that length.'

'Yes, papa, but *we* do more than that *sometimes*,' exclaimed Frank (Andrew had quitted the room, and gone to the ladies, in the middle of the story); 'you know Farmer Williams's mare dropped down dead, in the middle of a turnip-field, the beginning of this season, in the famous run you had with that slate-pits hare.'

'True, my dear,' replied Mr. Raby; 'but Dick tells me she had only been up from grass a fortnight, and that she died from want of condition.'

[1] The reader may recollect a description, somewhat resembling this, of a run over Leicestershire; but it is lawful for an author to take a leaf out of his own book.

'Thank ye, Francis,' exclaimed Mr. Somerby; 'I'll drink a bumper to your health. You have given me a capital lift in the defence I am called upon to make to a somewhat serious charge, and to a reflection upon fox-hunters and fox-hunting. You have helped me to the very loop-hole at which I can escape. You shall now hear what I have to say; and, as I am sure you will, one day or another, be a fox-hunter, I advise you to bear in mind my observations. The facts are these:—Mr. Meynell, and some other masters of foxhounds, have brought them to the very highest pitch of perfection of which their nature, I believe, is capable, both as to high breeding and condition; whilst the state of the horses that follow them is left very nearly where it was. Strange to say, Cecil Forester, the very best rider we have amongst us, and supposed to be the best judge of a hunter, declares he never saw half a dozen first-rate *thorough-bred* hunters in his life; the consequence is, that the half-bred horse is still, for the most part, required to do what the thorough-bred cannot more than do; which is, *to go a racing pace over a country*; and he *must* go a racing pace to keep up to Meynell's hounds. Then, again, the hunter remains in the back-ground in another respect. Hounds are preserved in condition all the year round; that is to say, they are kept to a certain point of strength in their food during the summer, and are exercised regularly till hunting again commences. But how is the hunter served? Why, by the absurd prejudice of our grooms, to which we inconsiderately give way, he is stripped of his fine condition at the end of the season,—which, by the way, it has taken half a year to acquire,—and allowed to run three months abroad, accumulating a load of bad, flabby flesh, amidst the persecution of flies by day, and subject to all the vicissitudes of our climate by night. Now what follows? He is taken up in August, and by the end of October—at all events, by the first week in November—is expected to be equal to more than the exertions of the race-horse who has never been entirely thrown out of condition since he was first saddled. These are the causes of such distress and apparent cruelty to the horse that follows foxhounds, and account for the few that, by means of great *accidental* superiority in the animal, *are alone able to see a fast and long run throughout.* Thus, also, the following paragraph, which I saw the other

day in print, is accounted for:—"Mr. Meynell's hounds have had great sport this season. Two extraordinary runs happened, of a very rare nature. One was an hour and twenty minutes, without a check, in which they killed their fox. The other, two hours and fifty minutes, without a cast, and killed. The hounds, in the first run, kept well together, and only *two* horses performed it; the rest of the field were unequal to its fleetness. The other run alluded to was performed by the whole of the pack; and though all the hounds were up at the death, two or three slackened in their pace just at the last. *Only one horse went the whole of it.*"[1] But we shall live to see these evils remedied. Some person or another, who has witnessed their extent, and reflected upon the causes, will, one of these days, expose them. We shall then hear less of tired horses, and very little of those killed with hounds, and of runs in which only one gets to the end, as in the extract I have just quoted. Common sense, indeed, *must* at once direct us, if we but give it a chance to do so. If hounds are every year better bred, and go faster, the breed of our hunters must also be higher and more pure. As the condition of the former improves, so must that of the latter; and I have one consolation left me from the unfortunate occurrence which has called forth these remarks. I have made up my mind, in future, to give my horses every chance in their favour that it is in my power to afford them. I have determined never to purchase a horse not quite, or nearly, thorough-bred, so long as I hunt in Leicestershire; nor will I ever throw a hunter quite out of condition again. "Let them down a little in the summer," are my orders to my groom; "but lose not what has caused *you* so much trouble, and *me* such expense, to obtain. Lose not that which, in fact, makes a middling horse a good one; for I fully agree with what I heard that fine sportsman, John Warde, say, the other day, at the cover-side of the Pytchley country, "*half the goodness of horses goes in at their mouths.*"'

'Will you favour us,' said Mr. Raby to his guest, 'with the

[1] See *The Meynellian System*, by the late John Hawkes, Esq., p. 21. It is more than probable that one of the three horses thus distinguished was ridden by Mr. Hawkes himself, one of the finest horsemen of his day, both over a country and over a course. Many of my readers will remember The Printer, and Featherlegs; *and that Mr. H. always rode horses of pure blood.*

names of some others of the conspicuous sportsmen who have been hunting in Leicestershire with Mr. Meynell in your time?'

'With the greatest pleasure,' answered Mr. Somerby. 'You will excuse my giving them as they present themselves to my recollection at the moment. There have been amongst them—The Duke of Orleans; Lords Maynard, Spencer, Sefton, Winchelsea, Harborough, Stair, Craven, Robert Spencer, Charles Manners, Robert Manners, Paget, Villiers, Egmont, Chatham, and Somerville; Sirs Carnaby Haggerstone, John Shelley, William Gordon, Harry Featherstonehaugh; General Tarleton, Colonel Carter; Messrs. Loraine Smith, Prince Boothby, Charles Wyndham, Lambton, Ralph Lambton, Forester, Cholmondeley, George Germaine, Martin Hawke, Jacob Wardell, Lemon, Cradock, Thomas and Robert Grosvenor, Goodhere, Norman, Arthur Paget, Conyers, Morant, Assheton Smith, Pole, Saville, Musters, the two Heyricks, John Hawkes, Lockley, Charles Meynell, Hugo Meynell, junior, Orby Hunter, Rose Price, Peach, Boates, Robert Montgomery, Berkeley Craven, Puleston, John Madocks, Vanneck, Bennet, Graham, Harnes (of Glen), Nedham, etc. etc. There are also some excellent sportsmen amongst the graziers of this part of Leicestershire, and none better than Deverell and George Henton. Neither must I omit Ted Hodges of Leicester, a very conspicuous sportsman, in every acceptation of the word; as a judge of cocking, a nonpareil.

'Then, again, there is a new set just coming among us—Lords Plymouth and Foley; Sirs Henry Peyton, Stephen Glynne, and Wheeler Cuff; Messrs. Rawlinson, the Lindows (twin brothers, and capital hands), Rolleston, and Frank Forester; the two Bruens from Ireland (with as many horses as would do for a country fair), Lloyd, the dandy Welchman, Apperley, and Thomas Assheton Smith, better known as "*the* Tom Smith."'

Here the conversation was interrupted (Mr. Egerton was about to speak) by Frank exclaiming to his father, 'Oh, papa, and has Mr. Somerby hunted in the Pytchley country? Would you ask him to tell us something about Dick Knight, whose picture, representing him topping the park-pales on Contract, our huntsman has got in his parlour?'

'You unreasonable rogue,' said Mr. Raby; 'I wonder what you will ask next?'

"Dick Knight."

From a picture by B. Marshall.

"Dick Knight."
From a picture by R. Marshall.

Mr. Somerby, however, having overheard the question, good-naturedly replied to it:—

'Why, Francis, I am scarcely old enough to have seen Dick Knight in his very best day; but the prints which you speak of give an excellent idea of the man; and, from the knowledge the amateur artist, to whose pencil we are indebted for them, had of him, as a huntsman and sportsman, we must give them full credit for accuracy of design and character. Has he not exhibited him displaying all the good properties which his calling, as a huntsman to foxhounds, requires? In the first place, what a horseman does he appear! How firm and beautiful is his seat in the tremendous leap he is taking, obliged as he is, at the same time, to stoop forward on his horse to avoid the bough of a tree! Then, what zeal he evinces! and what coolness, while changing his horse during the run, the opportunity being offered by his passing his own stable door. Instead of being in a hurry to mount, he casts his eyes towards his hounds and the country, before he puts his foot into the stirrup. Then, see him with his hounds at fault, and observe his anxiety for their safety, whilst the colt is gambolling in the midst of them; and, lastly, mark him at the finish, with the dead fox in his hand. "*Who-whoop! was never so carried,*" cries he, on dismounting from the fore-horse of the team, whose state of exhaustion is so admirably depicted by the artist, that we could swear that, in one more field, the nag must have died, if the fox had *not*. In fact, I have always told my friend, Loraine Smith, for *he* claims the honour of having been the designer, that no hunting prints have ever yet appeared anything like so good as those of which we have been speaking; neither do I believe there have been many better huntsmen than the celebrated Dick Knight.

'Perhaps you will like an anecdote or two, Frank,' resumed Mr. Somerby, 'of this noted man. His master is Earl Spencer, and a fine sportsman his lordship is. On his return from London, last year, at the end of the gay season, almost the first thing Dick said to him, was, that he "feared the country was about to be ruined." Lord Spencer being then high in the administration of it, naturally associated the idea with the general ruin of Great Britain, whereas Dick was only alluding to Northamptonshire as a hunting country. "What now then, Dick?" said his lordship. "Why, my lord," he replied,

"they are going to cut a d—d canal through the best part of our country"; a thing of all others, by the way, most wanted by the inhabitants of it, and which would benefit, instead of injuring it as a hunting country.'

'How so, Somerby?' said Sir William.

'Why, in consequence of the present great scarcity of coals, from want of water carriage,' continued Mr. Somerby, 'you will find, in many parts of Northamptonshire, three high and strong blackthorn hedges, where one only would be required. The object in planting *three,* is, that one may be fit to cut down for fuel at a certain period, and the others follow in succession. I have often been stopped by these fences, which, as you may imagine, nothing without wings can get over.

'But the other anecdote,' resumed Mr. Somerby; 'I must not forget that, as I see my little friend is on the listen for it. There was a parson in the Pytchley country, sadly given to press upon hounds, a fault never forgiven by huntsmen. It happened that, one day, the parson dropped short in a deep brook, and as he was floundering about in the middle of it, Dick rode clean over him, with these words in his mouth: "*His reverence swims like a cork; but never mind him; this is only Friday, and he won't be wanted till Sunday.*" At a subsequent time there was another of these inconsiderate riders with his hounds, who, although well known in the sporting world, happened to be a stranger to Dick Knight. Moreover, he was clad in a blue coat, which added nothing to his appearance and character, in Dick's eyes. At length the gentleman got an awful fall, his horse rolling over him, and he lay as if he were dead. "There," exclaimed Dick; "*thank God, we have done with you!*" In a few minutes, however, Mr. G—— was in his place again, when Knight, observing him, coolly said to himself, "*A resurrection before the time, to a certainty. I had hoped never to have seen you again in this world. I wonder what you'll do next?*"'

What a funny fellow that Dick Knight must have been, papa,' said Frank.

'Oh,' said Sir William, 'we have not done with him yet, Frank. I was out with the Pytchley, once, when we thought we were in for a blank day. In fact, it was three o'clock, and not a tongue to a fox had been heard. At last a hound, called

"His Reverence swims like a cork!"

Abelard, spoke: "Hark!" said Dick, holding up his cap, that he might hear the better; "that's *Abelard. A reprieve, by the Lord!*" I need hardly add that he was right, for Abelard was the best hound in the pack, and his blood is in most of the best kennels in England; the blood of the Pytchley Abelard, indeed, is a passport to any hound.'

'But we have omitted the best anecdote of Dick Knight,' said Mr. Somerby, 'and my young friend here must have that. Dick was a great favourite with his noble master, and, like all favourites, now and then presumed upon it. Having taken a tremendous leap, one day, on Contract, Lord Spencer, who was next to him, pulled up at it, and paused. "*Come along, my lord,*" roared Dick; "*the longer you look, the less you will like it.*"

'The incident that led to the masterly execution of these prints was a spirit of jealousy between Mr. Assheton Smith and Dick Knight, when they met together, on one particular occasion, in the field, the former riding a celebrated hunter called Egmont, and the latter the equally celebrated Contract. In fact, it was Quorn *versus* Pytchley. The prints were first published by Jukes, a great printseller in London, who is said to have realised fifteen hundred pounds by the copyright, which was made a present to him by Mr. Loraine Smith.

'Loraine Smith, on another occasion, sketched himself in the act of fording a river after hounds, with his coat-skirts tucked up to his shoulders, and thereby getting a considerable start of the rest of the field, with the exception of Lord Maynard, who chanced to follow him; and the lines written underneath the print:—

> '"By following Smith, a *cute chap* at a pinch,
> Who knows all the depths of the brooks to an inch;
> Lord Maynard, too, followed, and both did embark,
> Only wetting their tails just below water-mark."'

'I conclude,' said Mr. Raby, 'that Mr. Loraine Smith is a good man across a country.'

'Few better, for his weight,' replied Mr. Somerby; 'his great excellences, as a rider to hounds, are, his judgment, and fine eye to direct him in taking his line. On the 12th December 1792, he went to the end of, perhaps, the finest run that Leicestershire had afforded up to that period, called the

Whetstone day, the fox having been found in Whetstone Gorse, between Lutterworth and Melton. It lasted upwards of two hours, with only one check, and all over grass. Still, the person who most distinguished himself was Jacob Wardle, who, although he (with many others) went away with part of the pack, which could not be stopped, and only got up to the main body of hounds just as they recovered the scent, at a check at the end of a very severe burst, took the lead and kept it until the hounds ran into their fox, at the expiration of the time mentioned. The horse he rode—a thorough-bred grey, afterwards called Whetstone—had never been ridden as a hunter before in his life, and was purchased by Forester, for 250 guineas, in the field. Lord Maynard, however, seeing the distress this horse exhibited, pronounced that he would never be himself again; neither was he. Lord Paget, who rode a horse called Slender; Pole, on True Blue; and Forester, on Sweeper, also distinguished themselves on this memorable day.

'Mr. Loraine Smith, on this day, rode a horse he had not long before purchased of Mr. Berridge; but, not having had a trial of his merits, he had not then given him a name. It was, however, by plunging with him into the river Wellin, near Langton, which he did at no small risk with a horse somewhat beaten, that he was indebted for a sight of the conclusion of this splendid run. He had the good luck to meet the hounds, evidently *running into their fox*, pointing for Market Harborough, having no one in company with them but Mr. Wardle. Mr. Smith's horse soon afterwards declined; and Mr. Wardle, on this young and raw horse, would have been a good two miles ahead of any other man in the field, had the fox not been headed nearly at the finish, which enabled several of his brother-sportsmen to witness it; and a glorious finish it was, too, in the middle of a large grass field. But, as regards Wardle and his raw horse, the most extraordinary part of the story is yet to come. The country about Langton was then just newly enclosed, yet he jumped all the strong post and rail fences without getting one fall. Neither was his crossing the river Wellin undeserving of notice. He pushed his horse before him, into deep water, leaped upon his back whilst he was in the act of swimming, and thus was carried to the opposite bank!

'I remember hearing of another desperate run, in which Mr. Loraine Smith distinguished himself greatly by his fine judgment in riding to hounds. On a day, with the same pack (Meynell's), called "the Alsops-house day," he appeared at cover on a five-year-old horse, of his own breeding, called Shopleton; and one, by his own admission, not of high form as a hunter. He likewise got a bad start, and never could get near the hounds till he met them on Leak Hills, on their return from Gotham Wood. Notwithstanding this disadvantage, towards the end of the run, which embraced an immense sweep of country, himself and a gentleman named Deverill were the only two that continued to keep with the hounds till they came to Kinnoulton cover, when his (Smith's) horse slackened pace. Deverill went on, and was the only man whose horse could raise a canter when the fox was dying. He rode a mare, called Gaylass, got by Lord Grosvenor's famous Mambrino, whose fine picture by Stubbs has been so much admired; and, in consequence of her performance this day, she was sold to Sir John Shelley, and by him to Sir Harry Featherstone, in both instances at large prices, remaining a first-class hunter, in Leicestershire, for several successive years. It was computed, at the time, that, by his knowledge of the country, and the points the fox was making, Smith saved three miles of ground in the course of this run, which is the principal cause of my having detailed the particulars of it to you.'

'Now, Frank,' said Mr. Raby, 'you have had a great treat; so take yourself off to the ladies. I dare say you will dream of Leicestershire and Dick Knight.'

'We shall see him in Leicestershire, some day or another,' observed Mr. Somerby.

'No,' replied Mr. Raby; 'at least, I hope not. Melton Mowbray is no place for younger brothers: and I fear it has often proved too much for elder ones.'

CHAPTER III

Devoted to rural scenes and characters, and combining matter of amusement and instruction, with maxims of sound theory, and examples well worthy of imitation.

THE next day being Sunday, Frank had matters of a graver kind to attend to—all very necessary, however, to guide him in the 'race' he had to run; and the plain, comprehensible sermons he heard in Amstead Church were admirably adapted to that purpose. But, on the Monday, a pursuit was proposed to him, by Jem Perren, the keeper's son, quite as much to his taste, at that early age. This was a game, once in much vogue in England, and especially in counties bordering on the sea-coast, known by the name of 'a crow's-nest race';—that is to say, either a carrion-crow's nest, or a particular one in a rookery, was to be climbed for, by three boys, and he who first put his hand into it was the winner. Now this was not at all to Andrew's taste; so that Frank had to look abroad for his competitors; but he had no difficulty in procuring them. One was the son of the rector, a fine and spirited lad, and of the same year with himself; and the other, a son of a neighbouring gentleman, much of a like kidney.

'That shall be the nest,' said Frank, pointing to one in the highest tree in the rookery. 'Surely not,' said young Chapman; 'the boughs are very slender; indeed they look as if they would break with our weight.' Jem Perren was likewise of this opinion, and began to lament having proposed the day's amusement. 'Nonsense,' said Frank, 'the tree is alive and good at the head, and I'll be bound it will bear us.' In fact, '*possunt, quia posse videntur*,' was his motto; and he thus addressed his competitors:—'Now, my boys, off with your jackets! when Jem gives the word, let us start.'

The race is not always to the swift, but it is sometimes to the *bold*; and this was the case here. It was well enough contested, until the party arrived within a few yards of the summit, when the apparent slightness of the boughs, together with the frightful abyss below, caused young Chapman and the

"Who-hoop! I've done it!"

other boy to pause. But Frank was not to be daunted. With the branches trembling under him, onward he went to his point, and putting his hand into the nest, cried out, '*Who-whoop!*—I've done it! Here are two eggs in the nest,' which he instantly put into his mouth, to secure them from being broken in the descent.

'Glad to see you safe down, sir,' said Jem Perren; 'I was mortally frightened for you; and, if you had tumbled, what would my lady have said to me?'

'Oh,' said Frank, 'if I was, like Andrew, to do nothing but what mamma likes, I shouldn't have much fun. But, Jem, I am sorry to see the rooks have begun to lay, for it shows that it will soon be over with hunting for this year. How curiously these eggs are speckled! but they are not all speckled alike.'

At this moment Mr. Egerton made his appearance, and asked who had been taking rooks' eggs, as it was Mr. Raby's orders they should not be touched. Frank at once confessed himself the culprit, having suffered enough, on a former occasion, from concealing the truth,—in plainer English, telling a direct lie.

'Do you see what misery you have inflicted on those poor birds, which are hovering round their empty nest?' continued Mr. Egerton. 'For my own part, I have always been a great admirer of birds—their notes, their nests, their eggs, and all the economy of their lives;—nor have we, throughout the order of creation, any beings that so continually engage our attention as these our feathered companions. It is my opinion, that whosoever can exercise cruelty towards a sparrow or a wren, the most insignificant of birds, would, when circumstances enabled him, be cruel to his fellow-creatures.'

'But, sir,' observed Jem Perren, 'father says, "take every nest you see, Jem; they are nothing but varmint": so I knows not what to do; and you knows, sir, our farmers gives sixpence a dozen for young sparrows; and in the last year's churchwarden's account, I seed, with my own eyes, seventeen shillings paid for seventeen dozen tomtit's heads, three and fourpence of which came to my share.'

This was something of a damper for fine sentiment; and Mr. Egerton, taking out his watch, observed that it wanted but half an hour of dinner-time.

'What's to be done to-day?' said Mr. Egerton to his pupils, after school, on the morrow following the crow's-nest race. 'I am going in the phaeton, with mamma, to call at the Grange,' answered Andrew; whilst Frank admitted that he was informed, by Dick Perren, of a marten-cat, that he had seen in the big wood; and he believed he could show him the tree in which it makes its bed. 'I suppose, sir, there is no harm in killing him, if we can; as Dick says he not only destroys the game, but the huntsman to the foxhounds will be very glad to have him put out of the way; for his hounds have run him twice, without being able to catch him, and he scratched some of them sadly.'

'The marten-cat,' said Mr. Egerton, 'is a very predatory animal, and, as such, there can be no harm in destroying him; and if you take him alive, which I conclude you will do, I wish to see him previously to your putting him to death, for he is a very beautiful animal. Then, again, of all those called vermin, we have none more admirably fitted for a predatory life than the marten cat. He is endowed with great strength of body, for his size; is remarkably quick and active in all his motions; has an eye so clear and so perceptive, that nothing can stir without his observation; and, to complete his accomplishments, he has a perfect sense of smelling. Again, his feet are peculiarly adapted to his habits; not treading upright on the balls alone, but with the joint bending, the fleshy parts being embedded in a very soft hair; so that the tread of the animal, even on decayed leaves, in a wood, is scarcely audible by its prey, which it, consequently, very seldom misses getting into its clutches. In fact, everything combines to make him a very destructive animal; and, as he is neither protected by laws nor privileges, I have often wondered that he has so long been suffered to exist in so populous a country as this. I find he was an object of chase in former days, being mentioned, among the beasts of venery, in the *Book of St. Albans*, by Dame Juliana Berners.'

In about a fortnight from this time, Mr. Raby's harriers ceased hunting for the season, and the foxhounds went to finish theirs in a distant part of the country, in which they had a kennel. This was, then, the commencement of what are called the 'dead months.' An active mind like that of our hero, however, could not remain without some stirring pursuit; so

Hunting the marten cat.

he devoted much of his leisure hours to watching the operations of Perren, the head keeper, in breeding and feeding pheasants, of which there were, at that time, but few on Mr. Raby's estates, or, indeed, on any other in the county. Now, Perren was clever in this branch of his calling; and a few of his maxims were so well worthy of imitation, that his young master cherished them through life. Amongst them were the following:—

'In a young breeding-stock, never leave more than one cock to seven hens, or as near to that proportion as you can.

'When the hen pheasant is laying, or sitting, hang a bit of red cloth, or a few links of iron chain, near her nest, and no fox will molest her.

'Have a few patches of buck-wheat sown on the borders of covers intended as pheasant preserves. They operate like the salt-box in the dovecot, in attaching the birds to the spot.

'When you feed in the winter, *beans* are the most economical food, because the small birds cannot eat them, as they do the lesser grain. The small tick-bean is the best.

'The most dangerous time for pheasants, from the attacks of vermin, such as foxes, etc., is after *a wet night* in the moulting season. They are then naturally weak, and their wings being heavy from rain, they do not rise so quickly as at other times. They should now be watched.

'When rearing pheasants by hand, observe the following rules: During the first month, feed with hard egg and ants' eggs, but give nothing to drink. Feed early, but don't let the young birds go abroad until the dew has quite disappeared. Keep them very clean, and shut up at sunset.

'Second month:—Feed on wheat, barley, and ants' eggs. Being now subject to vermin, let them be supplied with sand to roll in; and if the pip seizes them, rub their bills with garlic, finely bruised, in tar.

'Third month:—When the new tail-feathers appear, danger is always at hand. Give them plenty of ants' eggs, and put them out, by day, on a white clover field, but not exposed to sun. You may give them white clover-seed, mixed with other grain.'

Our hero being observed, on one of the subsequent evenings, by Mr. Egerton, in earnest conversation with his father, in the drawing-room, was thus addressed by him:—'What is in the wind, now, Francis? I perceive you have been coaxing your father for *something*.' 'Why, sir,' replied Frank, 'Jem Perren

tells me that Mr. Wright's otter-hounds meet at Cranby Mills to-morrow morning, at five o'clock; and he has consented to my going out with them, provided the huntsman accompanies me, to see that I do not get into danger; but there is no fear of that, as I am only to take my leaping-pole.'

'What!' exclaimed Andrew. 'Does Mr. Wright keep hounds? I always thought he was so poor that he could scarcely keep himself and family, much less hounds.'

'Why, I fear, Andrew, what you say is too true; and, as Wright is a good, worthy fellow, I wish he was better off: but it shows how innate, in man, is the passion for the chase, when he will forego, as poor Wright must, many of the comforts, and even conveniences of life, to indulge it.'

On the following morning, at the early hour of five, Frank Raby and the huntsman were at the Mill, where Mr. Wright was in readiness for the sport, which he had little doubt would ensue, as he had seen some very fresh spraints (excrements) on the banks the evening before, although he had failed in marking an otter to, or lodging him in, his couch. He had but three couples of hounds, and one three parts bull-terrier; but all the party were provided with spears, which likewise served them for leaping-poles.

The brook intended to be tried, having been 'let off,' as the term is, by shutting down the sluices at the mill above, the banks and shallows were in a good state for the purpose; and in less than half a mile, the seal (or foot-ball) of a full-grown otter was discerned, and the scent soon got warm. The ear of these animals being very acute, they seldom wait to be surprised in their couch, and such was the case here. A view-halloo was given by Mr. Wright, on seeing the object of his pursuit dart into the stream, from the hollow of an old willow-tree, about four feet from the ground; and now the chase began. It was for some time doubtful, from the superiority of the animal over the dogs in swimming against the stream, and no opportunity having occurred, during his vents (*i.e.* when rising to the top of the water to respire), to strike him with a spear, as to what the issue would be, whether blood would be the result, or not. In one of his vents, however, whilst out of reach of the spearsman, an opportunity did present itself to the bull-terrier, who leaped from the bank on his prey, and a terrible conflict commenced. The otter instantly dived below the sur-

The otter hunt.

face, carrying the dog with him; and, had not the severity of his bite obliged the otter to let go his hold, Lion would have been very shortly drowned. But the animal had received a wound from the strong jaws of Lion, which so crippled his powers, that in less than half an hour from the time he was first found, Mr. Wright exhibited him on his spear-head, to the great joy of the party, and particularly of Frank Raby, who, to use the words of Taplin, one of the sporting authorities of that day, was 'ecstatic with delight.' Unable to find another, the sportsmen returned to their homes, Frank and the huntsman having been previously refreshed by the honest-hearted master of this small pack.

'Well, Frank,' said Mr. Raby to him, on his return, 'how do you like otter-hunting?' 'Oh, very good fun,' he replied; 'but not so good as hunting with our own hounds, because it is so soon over, for one reason; and again, I don't much like hunting on foot. But, papa, I could have told all about it from those lines Mr. Egerton read to us last night, in the library, from Somerville's *Chase*. It is quite curious how well he described everything I saw with Mr. Wright's hounds. What a sportsman Mr. Somerville must have been, eh, papa!'

'Why,' replied Mr. Raby, 'I am unable to speak decidedly on that point; but he was an amiable man, and a good country gentleman; although, by his liberality exceeding his means, he greatly injured his estate, but not his family, for he had none. Doctor Johnson, however, who lately wrote his life, as a *poet* (the Doctor, I presume, could say nothing of him as a *sportsman*), allows him one merit—that of setting a good example to men of his own class, by devoting part of his time to elegant knowledge; and showing, by the subjects which his poetry has adorned, that it is practicable to be at once a skilful sportsman and a man of letters—a hint which I trust, Frank, you will take to yourself. But the Doctor could not let him off without a *slap*. He says—"He *writes very well for a gentleman.*"'

'Well,' resumed Frank, 'I shouldn't wonder but Wilkins, who drives the Balloon coach, had been reading what Dr. Johnson said of Mr. Somerville; for, on my asking him, the other day, if Sir John Inkleton was not a very good coachman? he answered, "Why, Master Francis, *Sir John drives very well for a gentleman.*"'

As the summer season approached, Frank was sometimes put to a nonplus for his pastime; for, although he was making great proficiency in angling, and had commenced trying his hand at the gun, change was now and then sought for by him; and he addressed his father, on the eve of Whit Monday, with —'To-morrow is our Whitsun fair, papa; I wish you would let Andrew and myself go to it. I hear there is much fun there after the business of the day is over.'

'I am glad to hear it,' replied the father; 'all nations, ancient and modern, have allowed and encouraged sports and festivities amongst the lower orders of the people, as the best means of preventing greater and more serious evils; and he who would check them, when kept within reasonable bounds, commits a great mistake. For my own part, I myself, as a magistrate, rather encourage them, than otherwise; being convinced that, whatever tends to make people happy, tends to make them good; and you know we have very little crime in these parts. Now, I have no objection to your brother and yourself riding over to the Whitsun fair, in the cool of the evening, taking your words for not getting into any mischief.'

Andrew and his brother having partaken of an early dinner, afterwards proceeded, on horseback, to the village revels. And here they met with an incident, which it may not be amiss to relate, as a caution to all fair-goers who are not 'wide awake.' A person approached them at full speed, on rather a shabby-looking pony, whom they found to be the son of the miller at the Abbey, and one who had an excellent opinion of himself, the result, perhaps, of his old father's almost every-day boast, that 'our John is a very 'cute young chap, and not to be done by any on 'em.' 'Oh, young gentlemen,' exclaimed the miller, pulling up the pony with a jerk, 'I hope the Squire is at home.' 'He is,' replied Andrew; 'but what's the matter, John?' 'Oh, sir,' resumed 'our John,' 'I have been sarved such a trick—and I could have sworn the man warn't born that could have done it. You know, gentlemen, our four-year-old colt father bred out of the blind mare, a real soldier[1] all over, and honestly worth soldier's price, or a little more! Well, gentlemen, arter riding him only twice up and down the

[1] In the time of war it is customary for dealers to say of a horse that he would make a good soldier—meaning a troop-horse.

"What's the price of the young nag, Miller?"

fair, as I was turning him round to go again, at the corner of New Street, up comes two as respectable-looking gentlemen as a man should see in a score, dressed in top-boots and leather breeches, and says to me, "What's the price of the young nag, miller?" "Thirty guineas," says I; you know I left a little for bating.[1] "*Sound?*" says one. "*Quiet?*" says t'other. "Lord love you, gentlemen," says I, "why, father bred him. There isn't a sounder nor a gentler creature on the face of earth, as his mother, indeed, was afore him: and he's all over a soldier, if not an officer, which father says he is." Now, Master Raby, how do you think they sarved me? "Any objection, miller?" says one of these chaps—*devils*, God forgive me, Master Raby—(here Frank could scarcely refrain from laughing)—"for me to throw my leg o'er the young one, for a hundred yards or so, and you can hold my pony the while?" "None in the least, sir," says I; "ride him, by all means; you'll say you never was on the back of a nicer nag in all your life, and by the time he has been one month in the stable of a gentleman like you, nobody wouldn't know him again." Well, Master Raby, away goes this chap on father's nag, and away rattles t'other all sorts of stuff to me, such as—how was wheat selling in this country? was father a freeholder, or some big gentleman's tenant? did we grind by wind or water? and all such questions as those. Howsomever, I soon found out that father was ground out of his horse, clean enough; for thinking it a long time before the chap who was riding him came back, I says to t'other chap—"*Where can the gentleman be?*" "I'll run up this street," said he, "and see"; and so he did, but I seed no more of our horse from that time to this, and all I've got to show for him is this here pony (which they tells me is glandered), that the second chap left with me to hold, when he run up the street after t'other. Now, young gentlemen, if it warn't for father and mother, nobody should have seen me in the parish of Amstead again: I would have gone for a soldier, along with father's colt; for they tells me he will be at Bristol by to-morrow night, and away to the army, in a ship, before we could get there arter him.'

Here this part of the scene closed; and that which occurred on the meeting between ''cute John' and his father may be imagined by all who have read that between the Vicar of Wake-

[1] Twenty-five was the ultimum price of troop-horses.

field and his son Moses, on the return of the latter from a very similar expedition; neither can much be said of the appeal to the Squire of Amstead, as a magistrate. As for granting warrants for two 'respectable-looking persons in leather breeches and top-boots,' that was quite out of the question: forasmuch as, in those days, half the buyers and sellers of horses in the fair were thus accoutred; moreover, in the case of these two rogues, it would have been doubly useless, as no doubt but the said leathers and top-boots were hidden from sight, by smock-frocks, or overalls, as soon as the wearers of them were once clear of the town; and at least three inches taken off the colt's tail, if he were not further disfigured. All that Mr. Raby could do, was to throw back ten pounds of his rent to the old miller at the next audit-day, to console him for his loss, and to caution him, in future, from making 'our John' believe there were not sharper fellows in a horse-fair than the son of a country miller.

It was the wish of Mr. Raby that his sons should learn the art of fishing, in its higher branches, if such a term may be allowed me; but he discouraged the practice of angling with live worms for small fish, as being both cruel and unprofitable. 'The art of angling,' he would say, 'opens a wide field for the naturalist; and is a rational and contemplative amusement—cheap, and instructive withal.' Mr. Egerton, himself a fisherman, also encouraged this sport in his pupils, reminding them not only of its antiquity, but that it was not considered *infra dig.* by Homer, Virgil, and other celebrated poets, when distinguishing their heroes by their professions, business, or pursuit, to mention the 'skilful angler.'

Andrew entered heartily into this sport, and, by the instructions of the keeper, Perren, became rather a dexterous fly-fisher; he could also take good pike with his trolling-rod, generally making his bait an artificial minnow, or frog, by the advice of his amiable tutor. 'Why torment fishes or insects,' he would say, 'by impaling them alive on hooks, when inanimate objects will be equally attractive as baits? Besides, independently of the reflection cast upon angling, from the unnecessary pain inflicted, the principal art of the fisherman lies in his choice of flies. For example: do you not remember, last summer, when you accompanied me to the Grange, that Mr. Holmes, the rector, killed nearly as many

The shallows below the mill.

The shallows below the mill.

trout as the rest of the party altogether; and when grayling fishing, in October, he actually filled his basket, whilst the rest of us could scarcely take a fish? Then, again, I believe you heard the story of Mr. Musters, in the preserved waters of his friend, near Uxbridge. There was a trout of six pounds in a hole, which the keepers of the owner of the domain had long tried to take, but they had always failed in their attempts. Mr. Musters came down from London for the purpose, choosing a favourable day,—took the fish at the third throw, and gave the keepers a guinea.'

'Pray, sir,' inquired Frank, 'which do you consider to be the best rivers for grayling?'

'The Dove and the Trent,' replied Mr. Egerton, 'are, I believe, about the best; and the Teme, which runs through Herefordshire and Shropshire. In this river, near Ludlow, was caught the largest grayling ever seen in England; it measured half a yard in length, and weighed four pounds six ounces, which is considered a prodigious size and weight for this species of fish. By the bye, I can tell you an anecdote relating to this river, which is highly complimentary to the pursuit of fishing, associated as it is with a love of rural scenery (in which that country abounds), and the enjoyment of the beauties of nature. The autumnal months are best suited to this stream; and it happened that General Tarleton, after having revelled in the pleasures and luxuries of a London season, retired to the village of Leintwardine, about nine miles from Ludlow, for the purpose of fishing for grayling in the Teme. He had excellent sport; and when he left the small inn at which he had sojourned for a month, he wrote the following postscript to the landlord's bill: "I voluntarily add the sum of twenty pounds to the amount of this bill; being not only an acknowledgment of its very moderate charges, but in testimony of the fact that the month which I have passed in the village of Leintwardine has been the happiest that I have hitherto passed."'

There is one practice of the fisherman in which Frank Raby was desirous to excel, and this was the dexterous throwing of the casting-net, at which Perren, the head keeper, was a proficient. Dressed in his smock-frock, then, would Frank be seen at the shallows, below the mill, in which gudgeons and perch were plenty; and he was now and then rewarded with a

pike, in the deeper parts of the river, which were clear from reeds or weeds. But the casting-net is not a certain engine of destruction, as relates to large fish; its chief use is for catching what is called 'small fry,' either to stock waters with, or for baits, where live baits are used; and out of the multitude of fish which it takes, when thrown by a good hand, there is much choice to be made. But the exercise of this net is an act of much grace, when cast as it should be cast; for, although it resembles a bell in shape, whilst remaining in a quiescent state, when spread to its utmost extent it forms a complete circle. Long, then, before Frank arrived at maturity, there was not a person in the neighbourhood who could handle this net better than he could, his fustian-jacketed preceptor excepted. He was, likewise, a fair hand at a trout, and the knowledge of the flies best adapted to taking him, at various times and seasons; at the same time there was, in his estimation, somewhat of a tameness throughout the entire proceedings of the fisherman, which gave him some difficulty in determining whether he really liked it as a sport, or merely endured it as the means of beguiling a few vacant hours.

There was one reason for a difference of taste in the pastimes and pursuits which these brothers exhibited, and this was in the nature of the physical constitution of each, which seldom fails to have its effect on the intellectual one. Andrew had been a weakly child from his birth, and he was, consequently, unequal to enter into the rough and arduous pursuits which alone seemed to fascinate our hero. But the time was now arrived when both were to make their start in the world, and repair to a public school, as their father had done before them, and for which they were well prepared by Mr. Egerton. Yet here arose a difficulty, which it will be in my power to account for, as likewise to show how it was obviated.

CHAPTER IV

The hero enters upon the stage of life, and also on another stage, which, with various incidents narrated in this chapter, will be found corroborative of the adage, that—'as the twig is bent, the tree's inclined.'

I HAVE already presented to the reader the character and situation of the brother of Mr. Raby, uncle to the two boys; but it may be necessary further to observe that, having made up his mind to remain a bachelor, as more congenial to his unconquerable love of ease and quiet, as well as to his generally epicurean habits, he had settled in his own mind that Frank Raby should succeed to his fortune, which, as I have already stated, was considerable, and likely to increase rather than diminish in his hands. This being the case, it is but reasonable to suppose that he interested himself in everything relating to the formation of the character of his intended heir, who, although he rather encouraged than checked his desire to become a sportsman, he was very anxious should become a scholar, to fit him for that place in society it was his intention to have occupied himself, but which constitutional indolence put a bar to. With this view, then, he paid a visit to the Abbey, to talk over matters with his brother, respecting the future education of his nephew; it having been communicated to him, that, after the midsummer holidays, both Frank and his brother Andrew were to be sent to a public school. The result of this visit, as regarded the point in question, will be seen in the following dialogue:—

'Well, brother,' said Mr. Andrew Raby, 'I find the boys make their *début* in the world after midsummer; have you determined on Eton?'

'Why, as we were Etonians ourselves,' replied Mr. Raby, 'and have had no cause to repent of having been so, I see no objection to Eton; but have you yourself any?'

'None whatever, to the school. Dr. George Heath, who is at the head of it, and Dr. Goodall, the second master, are both scholars; although the first, in spite of his witty translation of the celebrated line—

'"Ille dolet verè, qui sine teste dolet,"

is as bare of humour as a hurdle is of flesh; and if Goodall had a little more of the stoic about him—at all events, a little more firmness—Eton would be none the worse as a school. But, as you kindly ask me the question, I candidly tell you, I had rather that the two boys should not both go to the same school, and I will give you my reason. Frank, though not wanting in parts, is disposed to do as little as he can possibly help with Mr. Egerton, and I am much afraid that if he were at Eton with his brother, he would coax him into making his exercises for him, which his naturally affectionate disposition would, I am sure, induce him to do. You are aware, brother, of my intentions towards Frank. I not only mean to leave him what I am possessed of, but it is my earnest wish that he should sit in Parliament, and make a figure in the world, in some other way than as a mere sportsman, which, it is evident, he is resolved to be.'

The door of the library opening at this moment, the conversation between the brothers was momentarily interrupted by the appearance of a neighbour, who was on terms of the greatest intimacy with them both. This was Mr. Freemantle, a rich London banker, who had purchased a fine property in the county, where he was beloved and respected by all for the kindness and hospitality which he displayed, as well as for the first-rate talents of his cook.

'Raby,' said the banker, 'how are you? What, Andrew, are you here? Delighted to see you both; but didn't know you were come down, Andrew. What news from town, eh? How could you find it in your heart to leave town at this gay time?'

'Why, you may suppose that is something extraordinary. The fact is, we are discussing the point whether Eton or Westminster school is best suited for Frank. Now, what say you?'

'Why, as to what boys may bring away in their heads from either, I don't think there is the toss-up of a guinea between the two; but, as to what they may bring away in their pockets, there is a wide difference between them. A terribly aristocratic place is that Eton school, and I 'll give you a proof or two. When my nephews were there, I gave them a five-pound note on the Friday, as I passed through to visit a friend at Taplow; and on my return to town on the Monday, chanced to see one of them at Salt Hill. "Well, William," said I,

"how much of the five-pound note is left?" "The five-pound note!" he replied, "why not a rap: it all went the same day; part to pay off a score for filberts and sherry; and the rest to Jem Stevens, for hack-horses and tandems." Then, how much do you think one of these chaps owed for gloves? Why, three pounds sixteen shillings! But, now I think of it, and I never mention Salt Hill that I don't think of it, I can tell you a better story than either of these, to show how little your Eton blades think of money. I had these same hopeful nephews of mine (by the way, you know they have turned out very well, both perfect gentlemen) to dine with me, on a whole holiday, at Salt Hill, and was soft enough to tell them to bring half a dozen of their friends with them. Well, of course, they did so; and a fine lot of youths they were; very highly bred, I believe, all, and the son of a duke amongst them. I gave them a good dinner, but was diverted by an incident in the middle of it. "Hand round the champagne," said I to the waiter; but Lord S—— put his hand on the top of his glass, and said, "No champagne for me; *I am a sherry man.*" Pretty well, thought I, for a lad of fourteen. However, they all delighted me by their behaviour, which was correct in every respect; but when about to rise from the table to return to Eton, I found that I had not done with them yet. "You must pouch these fellows, uncle," whispered William. "*Pouch* them," said I, "what do you mean by pouching them?" "Tipping them," was his reply. "They will consider themselves insulted if you do not." "Ah," resumed I, "now I comprehend you: and what must I give them?" "Oh!" replied James, my younger nephew, "a guinea *apiece will do.*" Here, then, was a good day's work; for what with the bill at the inn, and the *pouching*, I had not much left out of a twenty-pound note.'

'A true bill, no doubt, Freemantle,' said Mr. Raby; 'Eton, I find, is about the same as it was in my time; and your mention of Stevens, whose miserable hacks we used to ride, often at the expense of a flogging, reminds me of an anecdote of his hopeful son, Jem. When Wentworth left Eton, he was so enamoured of this aspiring blade, that he hired him as his personal servant; but he returned to his old quarters, at the expiration of three months; when he thus *accounted for himself*, as we magistrates say on the bench. "Mr. Vorth," said he, "was vell enough; indeed he vished to

hedicate me, and bought vigs for me, that I might learn to cut hair, and did many kind things besides; but his walet and I couldn't agree at all. At last, however, ve had a reg'lar blow up; and finding that Mr. Vorth backed the *walet* against me, I vopped him and the walet, and here I am, once more."'

'Well,' observed Mr. Andrew Raby, 'these are extremely amusing stories, and very characteristic of Eton; but let us return to our discussion on the question of choice between the two schools, and also hear what our friend Freemantle has to say on the subject.'

'Why, if you wish for my opinion,' replied Mr. Freemantle, 'you shall have it; but, mind ye, it will be one, perhaps, that you Eton and Oxford men—and you, in particular, Andrew, who brought honours with you from Oxford—may not exactly admire. Scholarship, or, if you will, learning, has been rung in my ears as the *summum bonum*—the one thing necessary for man. In fact, to say of a person that he is a scholar, seems to imply every kind of superiority; and to say that he is no scholar, the reverse. Now, I confess that, after much reflection and much inquiry, I am at a loss to comprehend the mighty benefits of what is called fine scholarship. Some advantages it certainly has; but, perhaps, its disadvantages are greater than we think, and for these reasons:—It too often prevents the excursions of a vigorous understanding, by keeping it in a beaten track, the invariable practice of all great schools; it perpetuates error, by imposing received opinions upon those who, if they had thought for themselves, would have discovered truth; it divides the attention, and often fixes it on subjects which are not suited to that particular genius and turn of mind, which nature would have exerted upon some other, the object of her own choice, and with much more advantage. Neither is this all. By loading the memory, it restrains the imagination; and, by multiplying precepts, it anticipates the judgment. Give me the man whose knowledge is derived from the copious sources of his own reason; whose mind is filled with ideas that spring not from books, but from thought; whose principles are co-existent, because deduced in a regular ratiocination, and not from scraps of different systems gleaned from the works of others and huddled together without examination. Where is the scholar whose opinion can be said to

be entirely his own? Or where is the genius that we wish to have trammelled by the impressions of others? Are we sure Shakespeare would have been what he was, had he been a deeply-read scholar? At all events, our public seminaries of learning do not exactly correspond with the precept delivered by the Spartan king,—"that the child should be instructed in the arts which will be useful to the man"; and if my father had had nothing to boast of but a first-class degree at one of your Universities, I should have never had the honour of being a banker's son. Nevertheless, although it is possible that a finished scholar may emerge from our schools and colleges, in total ignorance of the business and conversation of English gentlemen in the latter end of the eighteenth century, I am still ready to admit the advantages to be derived from the study of the Latin and Greek languages. They deposit, in the hands of a disciple, the keys of two valuable chests: and it is his own fault if they are afterwards lost, or laid aside.'

The morning of setting forward for school having arrived, it produced various sensations at Amstead Abbey. As for the two boys, the novelty of the thing, the thoughts of the journey, and the pocket-money, made their hearts light; but there were other hearts very differently affected, and one overpowered with its weight. This, as may be supposed, was that of the good and affectionate Lady Charlotte, who, as she could not command her tears, declined taking leave of her sons. Nor was Mr. Raby very fit to appear in their presence, although he strove to conceal what he felt. But there were two belonging to the establishment of the Abbey, whose feelings could not be controlled, and these were Dick Perren and the cook: the one absolutely bellowed from the effect of his grief at the loss of Master Francis, his young master; and the other, who, notwithstanding what she occasionally suffered from his tricks, loved him as the apple of her eye, betrayed the amiable weakness of woman, but by no means to her discredit. Her method of exhibiting it, however, was a singular one: she had taken her station at the first gate in the park, at which she knew the carriage must stop while the footman opened it, and approaching, with her face nearly enclosed in her apron, she chucked into the carriage two half-guineas, wrapped in a bit of white paper, with these words inscribed—'*God bless you both.*' And

what return did she get for this silent, though not less eloquent offering to her grief? Why, Frank put his head out of the window of the carriage as it passed on, and, schoolboy-like, roared out, '*You stupid old fool!*'

The party arrived at the county town just in the nick of time. The horses were being put to the 'Balloon,' and Wilkins was coming out of the office, with his whip in one hand, his way-bill in the other, and a 'Benjamin' thrown over his left arm—all evident signs of being quite ready to start. Having walked once round his horses, and examined their coupling reins and curb chains, after the manner of those times, he addressed his young passengers, as they alighted from their father's carriage, with—

'Glad to see you, young gentlemen; proud of the honour of having you about the coach. Two insides and one out—box-seat—all right! A beautiful morning. Now, Mr. James (to the footman), be alive with the luggage, if you please; we are all ready for a start; and you know we are werry particular at *this* end, if we can't always be so at *t'other*.'

'I say, Wilkins,' said Frank, 'I shall not ride inside after we get out of the town; I shall come alongside you on the box, and put James inside with my brother.'

'Very good, sir,' replied Wilkins, 'proud to have you on the box: you'll be one of us, some day or another, Master Francis, I am quite sure; but, will your papa——?'

'Pooh!' exclaimed Frank, 'how will papa know about it?'

'Not from me, Master Francis,' resumed Wilkins, 'I never tells no tales; but you had better not come out till we get through Clifford, for the parson there is almost always at the window when the coach passes by, and he is a tattling old devil; ten to one he don't slip it out next time he dines at the Abbey. We shall stop to water at the "Black Dog," Master Francis, and then you can come on to the box.'

The coach having arrived at the 'Black Dog,' and the exchange between Francis and the footman having been completed, the following edifying conversation ensued between the master and his pupil:—

'Do you feel yourself comfortable, Master Francis?' began Mr. Wilkins—'never on a coach before, eh? Here, put a bit of my box-coat over your knees, 'twill keep off the dust from your clothes.'

'I like being on the box very much,' replied Frank, 'but how it shakes!'

'Ay, master,' said the old coachman, 'it does that, sure enough, 'specially with one who ain't used to it; they do say, they are going to put the boxes of all stage-coaches on springs, but Heaven knows when that will be—not in my time, I fear. Our people say it won't do, that we shall go to sleep upon them; but there's no danger of a man doing that now, even if he should be a bit overtaken with drink. But, Master Francis, there is a great deal of *hart* in sitting on a coach-box, as well as in driving four horses. Your body must go with the swing of the box, and let your lines (loins) be as lissom as you can. It would kill a man, in a week, to drive as far as I do, over such a road as this, if he did not do as I say.'

'You have got good horses in the coach, Wilkins,' observed Frank.

'Good creatures in natur', sir,' was that worthy's reply, 'but they haven't no chance. This here sixteen miles of ground and only one rest-horse, kills them. To be sure, master grubs them well, or they'd been dead years ago.'

'Years ago! why, how old are they?'

'Why, I was going to say, you must ask my father that question. Howsomever, I have drove three of the four, nine years, and t'other came to this coach from the "Express," the first year I drove it: I think he must be quite twenty.'

'But how fat he is!'

'Always the case with groggy ones,' observed Mr. Wilkins; 'as soon as they have filled their bellies, they are down on their bed, because they are in pain when they stand up. A foundered coach-horse, like a gouty alderman, is always fat. But this near wheeler is my *favourite* (giving him, at the moment, three tremendous stripes, with his double thong, over his back, and two over his ears, followed by a sort of rolling noise in his throat, resembling that made by gargling for a sore one); you'll see how he'll hug his collar going up Brampton-hill, at the end of this stage. He's half a team himself, but still he's an awkward chap to drive. There's some difference, sir, I can assure you, between driving well-bitted fresh horses, like your papa's, and such dead-alive bow-kickers as these are, all as shifty as a lawyer: in fact, this off-wheeler is a lawyer all over, for he'll not work at all, if he is not devilish well paid for it; and I keep

a short Tommy in the boot, on purpose to pay him off. However, Master Francis, you shall try what you can do with them if you like, so shift over to my side, and I 'll put the reins right in your hand.' [Here it may be observed, that the short wheel-reins being generally in use at that time, the placing the reins of four horses in the hand of a tyro was not a complex affair. The wheel-reins merely rested across the left hand, after passing between the fore and middle finger, and those of the leaders passing between the thumb and fore finger, and the fore and middle finger, were very readily distinguished from the others.]

'Now, Master Francis,' resumed old Wilkins, 'mind what you are about. Keep your wheel-horses to their collars, and your leaders will get out of their way of themselves. Now, let me see you point your leaders to the left without moving your wheel-horses. Well done, master! that will do. Now shoot out your wheelers to the right without disturbing your leaders. Ah! that 's not so easily done; but it will come all in time. A man wants three hands to stir these bow-kickers, 'specially if he ain't used to them. But let me see you hit this near wheeler. Well, not much amiss, Master Francis, though something like thrashing. I fear the old horse thinks you are playing with him, for he minds you no more than a bolster does a flea-bite. Now touch up the grey mare. Ah! master, that won't do. Always hit a leader *below* the bar, or you will be for ever having a bite, but catch no fish. But now, sir, if you please, I 'll take 'em in hand again down the hill, for it 's a long fall, and, as I told you before, this near wheel-horse is rather given to say his prayers, if he steps on a loose stone.'

At the bottom of the hill (they were now close upon a village), Wilkins pulled up his coach, and, in an undertone, said to an outside passenger, 'Now, sir, if you please, will you get down, and walk through the town?' On his afterwards resuming his seat, at the other end of it, the dialogue thus proceeded:—

'What is the meaning of this, Wilkins?' asked Frank; 'why not let that passenger ride through the town?—you are not heavily loaded.' 'Why, sir,' replied Wilkins, 'between you and me, I means to swallow that gentleman to-night.'

'Swallow him!—what the deuce do you mean?'

'Why, Master Francis, I don't mind telling you, because all the servants at the Abbey says that you are not one of the wide-

in-the-mouth sort, no tale-teller. We poor coachmen, you know, sir, *must live*; that is to say, we must make tongue and buckle meet at the end of the year, or we gets into trouble. Now, this can't be done for only ten shillings a week on such a dull road as this, besides what we kicks the passengers for, without a bit of shouldering. This gentleman is what we call a shoulder-stick, and, instead of his fare going to the proprietors of the coach, it finds its way into my short pocket.'

'And do you never get found out?'

'Sometimes. I lost one good sarvice, owing to shouldering a sodger. Made a vow, Master Francis, never to shoulder another sodger, for a proprietor can see him a mile off. No more cocked-hats and feathers, said I, for me, except they are on the bill, and then they ain't worth having.'

Just at this moment the 'Balloon' coach, *down*, appeared in sight; and, on both coaches being pulled up alongside each other, the following somewhat symbolical sentences were interchanged.

'How do, Joe?'

'How do, William?'

'*Anything said?*'

'No; but I thinks the young one's *fly*.'

'Good day, Joe; there's three in and two out, booked for you to-morrow.'

But we must here close this portion of our history. Let it suffice to say, that Frank got another lesson from Wilkins, with some hints which he never forgot: but on the approach of night, resumed his inside place, and, in due time, found himself safe in London, under the roof of his uncle, who was delighted at the thoughts of his nephew making such a promising start in the world, with the assurance that, in after-life, he would have the means of supporting both the rank and character of a gentleman.

It was three years since the young Rabys had been in London, a period at that early age well-nigh long enough to obliterate all recollection of what it had appeared to be. Three days, however, having been allowed them to see what was best worth seeing in their eyes, they made the most of their time, nearly exhausting the energies of their uncle, who made no small sacrifice in exerting them. And there was one place which he had believed nothing could have ever induced him to

visit again, being so very little to his taste, and that was Tattersall's.

'Do let us go to Tattersall's,' said Frank to his uncle, on the Monday; 'I should so like to see all the fine horses he sells; besides which, I dare say, we shall meet with some of papa's friends.'

To Tattersall's then they went, and witnessed a curious scene. The impatience of a schoolboy is proverbial; and that of Frank Raby for the scene of action having got the better of the tardy motions of his uncle, the party found themselves at 'the Corner' at least an hour and a half sooner than they need have been, a period of the day when the auctioneer is employed in offering for sale a few low-priced hacks, as a sort of prelude to the more important scene which is to follow, when the aristocratic part of the audience assembles. This, however, passed unnoticed by the uncle, who was no horse man, but not so by Frank Raby. 'What! uncle,' says he, 'is this the famous Tattersall's that I have heard Sir John Inkleton and my father talk so much of?—where Sir John sold eight grey coach horses, not warranted sound, for £800! Why, I did not see a worse set of rips at our Whitsun fair!'

'Rips to be sure they are,' said an old friend of his father and uncle, who stepped out of the crowd at the moment, just in time to hear the remark, 'yet I have bid seventeen pounds for one of them, a very useful-looking pony. But let me shake you all by the hand. Raby, glad to see you. Lads, who would have thought of seeing you in London?—on your road to Eton, I suppose; and how did you leave them all at the Abbey?—not coming to town this season, I fear.'

'But, Mr. Verner,' said Frank, interrupting him, 'why don't you buy the "useful-looking pony"? he must be cheap at that money, and I hear Tattersall now crying out—"Going at eighteen pounds."' 'Well, Frank,' replied Mr. Verner, 'to oblige you, I'll go another pound; you would like to have to say, when you write home, that you saw me buy a horse at Tattersall's': so catching the auctioneer's eye, and tipping him a wink, down went the hammer, with—'For you, Mr. Verner, I believe'; followed by a nod of assent from his customer.

BIRMINGHAM

"The Prince of Wales,"
Birmingham coach of the olden time.

"The Prince of Wales".
Birmingham coach of the olden time.

Now, were it not for the well-known rapidity with which the Messrs. Tattersall dispose of the commencement of their sales, to make way for more business-like proceedings, it might be difficult to reconcile or account for the following fact, though fact it surely be.

'Pray, sir,' said a countrified-looking man to Mr. Verner, in about ten minutes after the purchase had been made, and as all the party were on the road to the large stable, to which they supposed the 'useful-looking pony' was returned till claimed—'have ye got a mon here to take away the *cow*, or must she 'bide where she is to-night?' 'The cow!' exclaimed Mr. Verner, 'what cow?'

'Why,' resumed the countryman, 'the nice black Alderney, Mr. Tattersall knocked down to ye for eighteen pounds; a better creature for milk never had a pail put under her.'

The case was exactly this: 'the useful-looking pony' had been disposed of, during the salutation between Mr. Verner and his friends, and the Alderney cow had been the next lot brought up. She was going for seventeen pounds, but for the exchange of the wink and the nod just in the nick of time, which consigned her to the possession of Mr. Verner.

The evening preceding the day on which the young Rabys were to repair to Eton, his uncle was addressed by Francis with — 'By what coach do we go to Eton, to-morrow, uncle?'

'By the Windsor and Eton "True Blue," of course; it will put you down at your dame's door. But what makes you ask the question?'

'Why,' resumed Frank, 'Sir John Inkleton particularly wished us to go by the Birmingham "Prince of Wales" coach, which would put us down at Slough, where it changes horses, and we should only have a mile to walk.'

'But your luggage,' observed Mr. Raby, 'what is to become of that?'

'Oh!' continued Frank, 'Sir John said that old Baldwin, who keeps the "Crown," at Slough, on our mentioning his name to him, would send our luggage to Eton in a cart.'

There must be some motive for all this, thought the uncle; something more than meets the ear. 'Come, tell me at once, Francis, what is the reason for your wishing to go by that Birmingham coach?'

'Why, to tell you the truth, uncle,' answered Francis, 'Sir John told me I should see the famous Jack Bailey, who drives it, and who taught him to drive four horses, when he was at Eton.'

'Well, Frank,' continued the uncle, 'I see no great harm in this request of yours; but, as Sir John was an Etonian himself, did he recommend nothing to your notice that might be more serviceable to you than a Birmingham coachman?'

'He didn't say much about anything else,' replied Frank, 'except that, when I got old enough, and wanted a good horse or a tandem, on a whole holiday, he would write a line to recommend me to Stevens, who used to let him have some good ones.'

'Black Monday' having at length arrived, Frank and his brother were placed on the front roof seat of the 'Prince of Wales' coach, the footman having been despatched by the Windsor and Eton 'True Blue' with the luggage.

On descending from the coach at Slough, Frank having slipped half a crown into Jack Bailey's hands, over and above what his brother had given him when he paid the fare, shortly arrived at his 'agreeable seat in Bucks,' as he used afterwards to call Eton school, where their tutor having soon found that his elder pupil had looked into Ovid and Virgil, and had not looked into them in vain, recommended his being placed in the middle remove of the fourth form, and then proceeded to examine the pretensions of our hero. Finding him all but innocent of the Greek tongue, his location was soon determined upon. On his informing his tutor, however, that he had begun making nonsense verses, a page of 'Cæsar's Commentaries' was put before him, when he set to work much in the same manner that the young aspirant in anatomy does, when he anticipates phlebotomising, by opening the veins of full-grown cabbages.

There is not, perhaps, in the whole course of man's life, a more remarkable change than the removal of the child, from the luxury and freedom of a wealthy home, to the frugal diet and strict subordination of a public school: from the tenderness of parents, and the obsequiousness of servants, to the rude and boisterous familiarity of equals, the tyranny of seniors, and, too often, the rod of a cruel and capricious pedagogue. These hardships, however, are beneficial: if they do not

absolutely steel the mind and body against the assaults of fortune, they turn to a good account. They produce an equilibrium in a large body of youths, of various pedigrees, distinctions, and expectations, and prevent the assumption of those imaginary perfections which swell the hearts of men, and still more of boys, to the great annoyance of their associates. Nevertheless, the best nature does not yield to chastening and buffeting without some degree of impatience; and it is to be feared that the sufferings of the generality of boys, at very large schools, in the lower classes of it especially, are greater than commonly imagined. At all events, the first week at Eton is a serious trial to the nerves of a shy or home-sick boy; a thousand questions are asked, some of them rather difficult to be answered; answered they must be, or a slap in the face is the consequence. The Rabys, however, made their way among the crowd, and partly for these reasons:—Their name was known as aristocratic, and they were called 'devilish good-looking fellows';—Francis, especially, who had a certain 'knowing look' about him, according to the language of those days, which soon made an impression: as did also the knowledge of his father being a master of hounds, and of his having brought letters of introduction to Stevens and Jack Bailey, from the well-known Sir John Inkleton, who was considered an ornament to Eton school. Still, all this did not serve him as an indemnity from some of the tricks commonly played off on new-comers, in these licentious days.

It was the saying of a Spartan king that—'Boys should be introduced to the arts which will be useful to them when they become men.' Independently of the business of the school, this maxim has always been acted upon at Eton, in the various popular pastimes. Amongst the foremost of these, is the management of the boat, which soon became a favourite one of our hero, whose sculling was excelled by none at the expiration of his third year. He was likewise good at cricket, quoits, backsword playing, and other manly games; and above all at football, inasmuch as few could beat him at kicking shins. Andrew was also a good cricketer; and by his mild, unassuming manners, together with the reputation he acquired as a scholar, he soon became as popular as his brother in the society in which he moved.

It is not my intention to follow the Rabys through all the

grades of the school: it is sufficient to say that they both reached the fifth form with credit to themselves, as well as to those who instructed them, and proceeded, in due time, to Christchurch College, Oxford, although with somewhat different views; a first-class degree being the grand object with Andrew; a forward place with the foxhounds, the principal desideratum of Francis—the honour of being considered a good fellow in the college, and over the mahogany, standing next on his list of what he considered accomplishments.

CHAPTER V

Christmas at the seat of 'a fine old English gentleman,' with its appropriate accompaniments—good company, good cheer, and good sport.

THE month of December, despite of frost and snow, is a cheerful month in the house of a country gentleman whose means are large, and consequently Christmas and its festivities were well kept up at the Abbey. Even customs of monkish introduction were observed, and the interior of the mansion was decorated with holly branches, from the fine mirrors in the saloons, to the stewpans and crockery in the kitchen. Neither was the mistletoe forgotten, under the magic shade of which not a female in the establishment, from the governess to the kitchen-maid, escaped the usual and generally repeated salutation of Frank Raby in this season of licence and conviviality, his brother Andrew taking a part in the scene, but selecting a chosen few.

Ale had been brewed for the occasion, and there was little limit to the drawing of it, short of actual abuse; it being the wish of Mr. Raby that the hearts of his dependents should be gladdened, in proportion to his means of gladdening them, at this festive season.

It is *now* a commonplace observation, 'How little remains that poverty and innocence can partake of'; and we have legislators who, if they could, would make that little less; but, happily for the people, such was not the case in the times to which I allude. The dance round the maypole, on May-day, or on the village green, at Whitsuntide,—the harvest-home supper, the bonfires of November, and the good cheer of Christmas, were looked for and enjoyed as surely as the seasons arrived, and the contributions to these indulgences, from all the family at the Abbey, were at all times liberal.

The sirloins of beef, the mince-pies, and plum-puddings, the wine and ale, eaten and drunk under its roof, were in perfect

keeping with its baronial exterior; and the clothing and fuel, furnished to the neighbouring poor under the management of Lady Charlotte Raby, were still more abundant.

The meeting between Frank Raby and his father's huntsman was truly characteristic of both. It is not my intention here, however, to give a second edition of Frank's appearance with his father's harriers in the field; although he was complimented, by the huntsman, on the improvement in his hand and nerve, and the judicious remarks he made on some of the leading hounds; but we will proceed at once to his *début* with the foxhounds.

The morning was cloudy and still, looking like a hunting morning, and the family had all assembled in the breakfast-room, when Sir John made his appearance, the Abbey being only a mile or two out of the road that led to the appointed cover. 'Well, Inkleton,' said Mr. Raby, after the usual salutations had passed, and pointing to his son Francis, who was clad in a green hunting-coat, and a pair of leather breeches made expressly for the purpose, 'here is the happiest fellow, this day, in our own country, and, very probably, in the next to it. Andrew says, he has not closed his eyes since three o'clock this morning, praying heartily for daylight. I am sorry I cannot accompany you to the field, as I must attend the bench to-day, but I have ordered Dick, the huntsman, to do so, and take the young fox-hunter under his care.'

'There is no necessity for that,' replied Sir John; 'one of my hunters having been amiss, is much in want of work, and I have ordered Preston to be at the cover, and he will do all that is required, in piloting Frank; and you know old Preston is to be depended on.'

'*When the hounds find?*' exclaimed Lady Charlotte, with some expression of doubt on her countenance.

'As steady as old Time, I assure you, Lady Charlotte,' replied Sir John; 'besides, he is a perfect old woman across a country, and has too great a regard for his own neck, to run any risks of breaking Frank's.'

Breakfast concluded, Frank having fed no better than he slept, Sir John's cover-hack was announced as being at the door, and he and his happy companion set forward on their road to Bransford-wood; and thus they discoursed on their way:—

"H. for Windsor; go along, Bob!"

'Well, Frank,' said Sir John, 'how did you get on at Eton? I heard of your performances on the "Balloon" coach. Mitchell also wrote me word that Jack Bailey speaks well of you.'

'Oh, Eton's well enough out of school hours, Sir John,' replied Frank; 'lots of fun going on then. I liked Stevens very much indeed; he never refused me a tandem, and he ticked me for a terrier at once, the best you ever saw; he has drawn three badgers, and killed three cats, since I have had him. I only gave two guineas for him, and I have brought him down to have a breed between Myrtle and him. But everybody seems to like Jack Bailey; I have had several lessons of him.'

'That's right,' said Sir John; 'there's nothing like being well "*nitiated*" in road-work; and pray what was your favourite road, when you went out in Stevens's tandem?'

'Oh,' replied Frank, 'sometimes one, sometimes another; but I'll tell you a good story about what happened a fortnight back. Two fifth-form fellows went in a tandem to Egham, and dined at the "Running Horse." They drank too much wine, and, by taking a wrong turn, lost themselves in Windsor Great Park. Seeing a finger-post, however, the one that was not driving got out of the gig to read it, when, after a pause —for I suppose he could not see very clearly—he called out, "*H for Windsor*; all right, go along, Bob!" They came too late for absence, and got a devil of a flogging the next day; but "*H for Windsor; go along, Bob!*" has been a kind of watch-word at Eton ever since.'

'Capital!' exclaimed Sir John. 'I remember a joke, when I was there, which will never be forgotten. The fellows had all red coats made purposely for the Montem; and when they had to pass in procession before old George III., a lad named Ripston appeared in one big enough for a full-grown man, with skirts down to his heels, and great silver buttons, with a fox running engraved upon them. Old Heath was outrageous, and called him up to him, which being observed by "Old Nobbs," as we called the king, he asked the Doctor who the boy was? On hearing the name, his Majesty good-humouredly exclaimed, "Oh, Doctor, leave him alone; *I know his breed.*" The fact was, he was the son of a sporting baronet, a master of foxhounds, and he had had the coat made large enough

to fit an old huntsman of his father's, then past work. But here are the hounds; we are just in time; and, by the number of horses at the cover-side, it appears as if we should have a large field. You and old Preston must take care you are not ridden over at the start. And there is the master of the pack, God bless him! a better sportsman never cheered hound; and when you come to know what foxhounds are, you will say he knows how to breed them. In fact, taking them for size and shape, there is not such a pack, this day, in England; and if we live long enough, we shall hear of their blood in every kennel in the land. But, Frank, let me have a word or two with you before we get to the cover. We are sure to find a fox, and, there is reason to believe, a good one; I shall, therefore, tell Preston what to do with you. If he goes *down wind* when first he breaks, his point will be Blackthorns. In this case, I shall tell Preston that, if he takes you down the turnpike-road about 200 yards, and then turns short to the left, he will find a line of gates, that will lead you straight to the wood, where, probably, he may hang a little. Should he go *up wind*, Roystone will be his point, a very stiff country to begin with, and the Stark brook, to a certainty. Preston will here make for either the mill, to the left, or the bridge at Elwel, to the right; for *you* must not have the Stark, if you mean to return alive to the Abbey: it is wide and deep, and the banks are very soft. However, you will be in good company, for not more than one in ten of the field will have the Stark at all.'

The greeting between Sir John and the master of the pack was, as usual, kind and cheering. 'Glad to see you, Sir John,' said the master, 'you always bring us luck.'

'Glad to hear you say so,' replied the baronet; 'we certainly have had a succession of fine runs lately, thanks to your excellent hounds, and the way in which they are hunted. But I have brought you something more to-day; I have brought you a young sportsman, of no small promise, who has the good taste, even at his early age, to prefer foxhounds to harriers. I hope we shall enter him well to-day to a good run, and blood him at the end of it.'

'Glad to see you, sir,' said Mr. Warde (for of him and his hounds have I been speaking, and who was then in the zenith of his glory, and hunting one of the many countries which he

hunted in his time); 'although your father is no fox-hunter, I have a great regard for him as a conspicuous sportsman in his line, and a stanch preserver of foxes; and it was only last night that we drank his health in that honourable capacity. You have a clever little mare under you, and I hope we shall find out, before night, whether your father's old oats are as good as his new were. *I* was entered to hounds before I was your age, and I mean to stick to them as long as I can sit in my saddle. Now, Bob,'[1] to the huntsman, 'throw your darlings into cover; and,' addressing himself to Frank Raby, 'mind this, young gentleman—if you hear a hound speak in the cover, you may bet all the money you like that it is to a fox. *Every tongue* is a *fox* with my hounds, as I suppose every tongue is a hare with Mr. Raby's harriers.'

Scarcely had the pack spread themselves, right and left, in the wood, than Samson was observed lashing his sides with his stern, and Champion rushed through the strong brushwood to join noses, as much as to say, has *the villain been this road in the night?* 'Have at him, Samson,' said Mr. Warde; 'look about you, Bob, we shall find him in five minutes.' 'And Champion also says so,' returned the huntsman, 'and he never told a lie in his life.'

But the 'villain' did not wait to be found. The drag grew warmer and warmer as the hounds drew onward, and the deep tones of such of them as were equal to owning a scent at least eight hours old, being audible down wind, even in the deep recesses of the cover, away went as fine a dog-fox as ever wore a brush, and then the scene became glorious. The crash, when the body of the pack got together; the shouting of the foot people in the rides; the blasts of the horns; and the hallooing of the horsemen—some eager to assist in getting the hounds to their game, others mad to get a start;—all this had a thrilling effect on our young sportsman; but there was no time for looking about; the hounds were on good terms with their fox—their heads up, and their sterns down—and a fine grass country before them.

The fence out of the wood was an awkward one; it was a low, but stiff, gate, which, of itself, would have been nothing; but an open drain, under repair, was in front of it, on the rising side, which made the rider and his horse look about

[1] Robert Forfeit, who then hunted Mr. Warde's hounds.

them. Sir John led the way, followed by three more, when Frank cleared it, with a good yard to spare, sticking to his horse as tightly as if he had been strapped to his saddle; and this was, without doubt, the happiest moment of his existence. He had taken a dangerous leap, which several of the field declined; he saw a fine country before him, with his friend in the same field with the hounds, and only one field in advance of himself:—'I'll go till I fall,' said he to himself, and strictly did he keep his word. Fence after fence was cleared by him, in the company of a chosen few; but, as yet, he had not been observed by Sir John Inkleton. An accidental occurrence discovered him. The fence exactly in Sir John's line being impracticable from its height and strength, he was obliged to diverge to his right, to one corner of the field, where the generality of fences are practicable; when, sailing away on the headland, he espied Frank Raby approaching. There was no time for words, the chase being forward at the moment, and some lost time to be made up; so putting Petronius at some rails, he was landed in the next field, with the hounds in the one beyond it. When in the act of clearing these rails, however, he saw under him a ditch, of enormous depth and breadth, and, fearing that Frank's mare might not be equal to it, he waved his hand to him, as a signal not to attempt it. The signal was made in vain; Frank rode at it, and cleared it, with only the momentary loss of a stirrup. Sir John began to feel alarm. 'What will Mr. Raby—what will Lady Charlotte say to me,' muttered he to himself, 'if this boy meets with an accident? Still, what is to be done? I cannot lose my place with the hounds; and I doubt whether anything I may say to him will stop him.'

Onward they went, over a very deep vale, with a breast-high scent, taking fences high and stiff, and many of the field shaken off. At length they approached the Stark, according to Sir John's prediction; and it was apparent to those who knew the country for some time before they came close to it, by the large willow-trees on its banks, whose flourishing condition showed that they were luxuriating in the soil which best suits them—a black bog.

'Now what is to be done here?' said Sir John, once more, to himself; and he had the lead of the field at the time. '*I* will have it just where yonder blackthorn-bush is growing on

the bank, and that is sure to be the soundest part, in my view; but Frank will not be up to that trick. I'll wave my hand to him, not to attempt it. DON'T COME, DON'T COME!' roared the baronet; 'you'll be in if you do'; and Frank was not out of hearing at the time; but he might as well have made such a request to the waves at the flood of a spring-tide, and at it he gallantly went. The trick of the blackthorn-bush, however, was beyond Frank's experience in the art of riding to hounds; so putting his mare to the left of it, where the ground was rotten and tender, she fell on her head, on alighting—although she cleared the water—and gave him an easy fall.

'Bravo, by the heavens!' exclaimed Sir John; 'he is up again, and no harm done; what a rider will that lad make!'

In the next field but three, the hounds came to a check, when an *éclaircissement* took place.

'Why, Frank,' said the baronet, 'you are a very pretty fellow; what have you done with old Preston, on Skylark?'

'Oh,' replied Frank, 'I have not seen him since the hounds left the wood. I saw *you* turn down the left-hand riding, and, as I thought I heard the hounds turn that way too, I followed you.'

'But, Frank,' inquired Sir John earnestly, 'are you sure you are not hurt, for you got a devil of a roll at the Stark?'

'Not a bit,' answered Frank; 'it was not the mare's fault, for she cleared the water well.'

'Yes, Frank,' continued Sir John, 'she fell from the want of a little more support than you could give her when she landed in that soft ground, almost a bog. But, upon my word, you must not ride yet at such places as you have in this run, or you will break your neck some day. And the new leathers, what a pickle they are in, and how they will tell tales when you get home! Lady Charlotte will——' 'Oh!' exclaimed Frank, 'they will know nothing about it; they shall not see me till I am dressed for dinner.'

At this moment the hounds hit off their fox, and went on, but not at best pace. In fact, they were brought to slow hunting, at which Mr. Warde's hounds ever have been so conspicuous; and the attention of Frank was riveted to them.

At the end of an hour and thirty-five minutes, the scent mending towards the finish, and the hounds running from scent to view, the fox was in Bob Forfeit's hand, and his brush

given to Frank Raby by Mr. Warde himself, who was delighted at the sight of so promising a young sportsman in his country; indeed, he honoured him with peculiar notice.

Sir John being engaged to dine that day at the Abbey, Frank and himself proceeded homeward together, but not a word could be heard of 'old Preston,' nor, indeed, of a good many more of the field, who had been stopped by the Stark brook.

In the course of the evening, the health of Mr. Warde being drunk, himself and his hounds became the topics of conversation, and thus did Sir John Inkleton speak of them:—

'It may be presumptuous, perhaps, in me,' said this sporting and gentlemanlike young baronet, 'to give a decided opinion of a pack of foxhounds, it being evident that my experience has been chiefly confined to those I hunted with when at Oxford, and very good they were. Still, there is something in the character of Warde's hounds which strikes the eye, and fixes the attention of even a common and inexperienced observer, previously to seeing them at work, as being *animals* superior of their kind, as respects shape and power. Their style of hunting is equal to their high form; and as you masters of harriers,' addressing himself here to Mr. Raby, 'pride yourselves on overcoming difficulties in chase, and *hunting your game to death*, under the most unfavourable circumstances, I wish you had been with us to-day. There were many obstacles in our way:—First, the scent was excellent in the burst, because the fox ran straight, and he had not too much the start of us. Secondly, the country was excellent, until after we crossed the Stark, when a change of soil occurred, which is much against hounds in chase. Thirdly, we were twice brought to check by sheep, which, having a good fox on foot, threw us again behind. Then, to crown all, we had rather an unusual occurrence in that country—four fallows to cross in succession, which required the most patient hunting to enable us to hold on.

'The finish, however, was a glorious one. Bothered by the thirty-five minutes' burst, and a good hour's close hunting afterwards, the fox tried the earths at Hamden Wood, and finding them shut, laid himself down in the cover, and broke before the pack in view, having been beautifully hunted to his

point. In the space of thirteen minutes, as fast as foot could fall, we turned him up in the open, as your son Frank can attest.'

Here Mr. Raby looked at his son, evidently with feelings of satisfaction, but deemed it prudent not to hazard a word; and Sir John proceeded with his remarks.

'Then look at Mr. Warde himself. Putting the sportsman out of the question, what a true specimen he is of the old English gentleman. How amusing is his conversation; how playful his wit; how manly his exterior; and yet, how polished are his manners when in contact with polished society! How unfortunate it is that he is so heavy; for horses can scarcely be found to carry him well up to his hounds, over this very deep country.'

'Was Henry Warde out to-day?' inquired Mr. Raby.

'He was,' replied Sir John; 'he rode his famous horse, Star, for which, although a roarer, he has refused the immense price of 600 guineas. It is the only instance, I believe, on record, of a horse, with that defect, being esteemed so valuable as a hunter.'

'I conclude,' continued Mr. Raby, 'that you often visit the head-quarters of Mr. Warde's hunt?'

'Why,' answered Sir John, 'they lie rather wide of me; but I am occasionally induced to do so by the pleasant society I meet with. Then, again, wherever John Warde is, there is sure to be mirth and fun, and the living is very good at the club. Indeed, he told me this morning, in his usual droll style, that "*everything there was very good but the reckoning.*"'

'Ah! ah!' observed Mr. Raby, 'that is John Warde to a T; there is a gaiety of heart and lightness of spirit about him, which I have never found to the same extent in any other man; and it adds much to his popularity, that he has a joke ready at hand for every one. But it is not the reckoning at a hunting-club that can hurt either Warde or you. I do not know a better manager than he is; and as for yourself, Inkleton, if you steer clear of that accursed vice, gambling, you have enough for your enjoyment of all the fun this world can afford you. Neither your hunting, nor your coaching, nor your housekeeping, good as it is, can hurt you. You will, I am sure, pardon this remark from a man much older than yourself, and one who entertains for you a sincere regard, not

only on your own account, but as the son of a valued friend.'

'No fear,' replied Sir John; 'I never lost £100 at any game in my life; and as I know not one of my friends or acquaintance that is a gainer, but many who are losers by gambling, I mean to steer clear of it. In fact, I detest your professed gamesters; their hearts are as hard as stones, and as cold too; and they would rob their own brothers if they could.'

On the following morning Sir John took his departure from the Abbey, but not without having obtained a promise from Frank, to visit him before he went to Oxford.

CHAPTER VI

College life, with some sketches of men and manners at Oxford, in the latter part of the last century—Bibury Meeting in its palmy days

HAVING assumed the manly gown, we now find the young Rabys at the University of Oxford—celebrated for making gentlemen as well as scholars; one of the two great luminaries of the intellectual world; and, despite of the cavils against it, one of the brightest jewels in the British crown. We find them occupying handsome rooms in Peckwater, gentlemen-commoners on the books, and with an allowance of £600 per annum to each for their expenses, it being the wish of their father, and also of their uncle, who contributed towards it, that they should not only make a respectable figure in the University, but that they should have no cause for having demands upon them when they left it. Their establishments were suitable to their means. Andrew contented himself with two saddle-horses, passing under the denomination of *hacks*, and consigned to the care of Seckham, the livery-stable keeper, reserving the entire use of his servant for his own personal wants; whereas Frank had his two hunters and his hack in a private stable of his own, and looked after by an experienced man, who had been brought up, under Spencer, in the hunting stables at the Abbey.

And now let me introduce to the reader my hero's college friend, Hargrave. He was the son of a London merchant, educated at Rugby, and therefore totally unknown to Frank Raby previously to their meeting at Christchurch. But they were kindred spirits, and, according with the vulgar phrase, 'soon took to each other.' And there was some similarity in their personal appearance, at least in their personal character. So far from there being anything of the Andrygones about them—the term *dandy* was unknown in those days, and it would be well that it had never been called into use: they were plain and rather peculiar in their dress, somewhat approaching to the contrary extreme, with

the exception of not losing sight of cleanliness, and what is called neatness in their dress and appointments. In fact, their appearance was gentlemanlike and sportsmanlike at the same time—not an every-day combination at that period; and before the end of the second term they were pointed at, when together in the streets, as the two best horsemen in the University. Hargrave's stud consisted but of two thoroughly accomplished hunters; and, like Frank Raby, he had them, under his own lock and key, in one of the quietest lanes in the town. Moreover, his judgment was considered so good in everything relating to hunting, as well as in the management of his horses, that he was generally appealed to as an authority on all disputed points amongst the Nimrods of the University—at all events, amongst those with whom he was in any way associated.

And how happened it that Hargrave, the son of a London merchant, should have become so accomplished in field sports —for he was an excellent shot, as well as initiated to the noble science of the chase? The question is easily replied to. His father, who was himself a sportsman, had a seat and estate in Essex, and had entered him when young to hounds, and to those of one of the best and most zealous sportsmen of his own or any other days—the renowned Mr. Charles Newman. Again, the country hunted by him was one likely to make a man both a sportsman and a horseman, being full of large covers, very strongly fenced, and noted for the stoutness of its foxes. At an early age, however, few went better over it than young Hargrave did, on a small thorough-bred horse, which went by the name of *The Phenomenon*; and he was looked upon in the neighbourhood as likely to shine, at some future period, in a better country than Essex, although famous for the stoutness of its foxes.

From what has been said of Hargrave, it is scarcely necessary to state that he was acquainted with all the sporting characters, noble and ignoble, Oxford then could boast of, and that, by virtue of his seniority in the University, he had the honour of introducing them to Frank Raby. Amongst these was a very celebrated character whose name was Will Stuart, and of whom a short notice must be taken. He was, in the first place, one of the handsomest fellows in the country; of robust form withal; and declared by himself, and very gene-

rally believed, to be descended somehow from the royal house of Stuart. But his occupations could scarcely be called royal—at all events, not in the modern acceptation of that word. He was a deer-stealer, a dog-stealer, a pond-robber, and a poacher in all ways, from a pheasant to a jack-snipe; in fact, he would accommodate his employers in any way, provided they paid him well. But Stuart's *forte* lay in the difficult art of persuasion, of which the following is one rather remarkable example:—

'Won't you buy this capital dog of me?' said he to a young man who told him he considered him too dear by at least two guineas.

'Not at that price,' replied the young man.

'Then,' resumed Billy, 'you consider two guineas an object when the "*maximum* of excellence" is to be obtained, as you gentlemen calls it. Now, when you comes to take your degree, I'll tell you what they'll say to you: they'll tell you, that a *little more* studying would have put you in the first class; but for want of that *little*, you'll be nowhere.' And so it turned out.

Amongst the ignoble sciences patronised by Stuart, and in which he much desired to have initiated Frank Raby, was the very ignoble one of dog-fighting. Ignoble as it is, however, our hero wished to witness it, and was conducted to the pit by Stuart, the owner of one of the dogs, who had been the victor in several battles, and had only been beaten once. His competitor was also a formidable one, weighing thirty-six pounds, which was two pounds less than Stuart's, and, as such, inferior to him in one respect. His game, however, was notorious, and it was only shillings for choice—in other words, guineas to pounds—between the two.

I shall not disgust my readers with a description of the contest between two noble animals, whose services were intended for far better purposes. Let it suffice to say that, as it was the first, so it was the last exhibition of this sort that Frank Raby witnessed, and still he did not regret having witnessed it. Exclusive of the courage displayed by the dogs, during a contest of upwards of half an hour, the means taken by their handlers to increase that courage excited his astonishment, if it did not produce pleasure. There is no necessity for recapitulating them; but it appeared that one

index to the probable result of the fight was the position of the animal's tail. If erect, he was still undaunted; if inclined to droop, his pluck was doubted, and the betting immediately turned against him. The position of the tail, however, is the general barometer of the dog's mettle. Witness Shakespeare at a bear-fight:—

> 'Oft have I seen a hot, o'erweening cur,
> Run back and bite, because he was withheld;
> Who, having suffered with the bear's fell paw,
> Hath clapt his tail between his legs, and cried.'

There was another species of sporting, and one very much in fashion in those days, in which Frank Raby was initiated by Will Stuart — the aristocratic one of cock-fighting; and aristocratic it may certainly be called, confirming the truth of the assertion that, although the vulgar borrow vices from the great, the great occasionally condescend to borrow them, in their turn, from the vulgar. It must, however, be admitted that, in point of *respectability*—if such a term can be allowed in this case—there is scarcely a comparison between the operations of the cock- and the dog-pit, the former having been long the resort of many of our accomplished noblemen and country gentlemen, still standing its ground to a certain extent, whilst the latter is nearly abandoned. Whether it may last another century is a matter of some speculation, from the alternations which occur in the taste for all national sport; but that it has stood the test of ages is a fact too well established to admit of a doubt, as well as that a moral has been drawn from it. Themistocles' famous address to the Athenian soldiers affords one, and a signal one, too. On their march to battle he halted them, and directed their attention to two cocks that were fighting, descanting on their determination to conquer or die; and ordered cock-fighting to be afterwards annually exhibited in the camp. The Romans likewise admired the martial spirit of the gamecock; and it is even asserted that Cæsar's troops introduced cock-fighting in England, during their temporary invasion of the country, and that they even made quails to fight. Still, Columella calls it a *Grecian* diversion, and speaks of it in terms of ignominy, as an expensive amusement (which it is), unbecoming the frugal housekeeper, and often attended with the ruin of the parties who follow it. The most offensive part of this practice,

however, is now fortunately done away with—I mean the 'Welsh main,' as it is called, which consisted in causing thirty-one of thirty-two cocks to be slaughtered, before the surviving *one* was to be proclaimed the victor!

Although Frank Raby had seen some few exhibitions of fighting-cocks in his father's neighbourhood, and at Eton, he had never seen what is called 'a main' fought; but having a wish to see one, he accompanied his friend Hargrave to the Oxford cockpit, and was introduced by him to the celebrated Bob Dolly, who was at that time the proprietor of it. The particulars of this main need not be given; but, at the expiration of it, the following conversation took place between the two young sportsmen:—

'Well, Frank,' said Hargrave (for Frank was he always called by his intimates), 'what do you think of cock-fighting, now that you have seen it nearly in its best form?'

'Why,' replied Frank, 'I have scarcely made up my mind sufficiently on the subject, to give you a decided answer. I am, however, prepared to say that, although I cannot go the length that you do, when you say, you look upon two cocks, in the arena of a pit, in the light of two champions of olden times, who rush to the charge for glory only, and imagine that, in the shrill and animating note of their crowing, you hear the herald's clarion, still, I consider the first "setting-to," as it is called, of two highly-bred gamecocks, one of the most interesting sights that animated nature can exhibit. Their determined courage throughout the battle, and their invincible spirit, *to conquer or to die*, are something more than natural, and seem to justify the absurd notions entertained by the ancients of these birds, not only in calling them sacred to the sun, but making them to participate of a certain solar divinity, and to be thus feared—at all events, reverenced—even by the lion. But look at the cock in his natural state—a state of freedom: What a beautiful animal he is! What a pattern of a warrior, a husband, and a fine gentleman! See him clap his wings and crow; how proud of his courage does he appear; how gallant he is to his females; how jealous of a rival; and how he is formed for contending with him, for he is all muscle and bone! Then observe what language he has at his command! If he finds food, he calls a favourite female to partake of it; if a danger appears, he bids his family beware; and he

has his amorous phrases as well as his terms of defiance and of battle. But his crowing—why, he may be said to invoke the sun; indeed, Shakespeare calls him "the trumpet to the morn"; and many other poets have borrowed their images from him—

"The crested cock whose clarion sounds the silent hours";

amongst the most beautiful of them, as "the 'larum of the country labourer."'

'Well said, Frank Raby,' exclaimed Hargrave; 'upon my soul you would make a good Methodist preacher, but I much doubt your ever becoming a cocker.'

'I don't know what to say on that point yet,' replied Frank. 'There is much to admire in a battle, and still more in the system throughout; but I feel that there is something both disgusting and cruel in a long-protracted battle, however indicative it may be of the invincible courage of the animal, and however productive of a moral, as Mr. Wyndham and others have considered it to be. But as you are such an advocate for cock-fighting, let me hear what you have to say in defence of it.'

'Why, to tell you the truth,' returned Hargrave, 'I think that, next to finding a fox, the excitement produced at the onset of a battle between cocks exceeds any that I have hitherto experienced. I, therefore, must say I am very partial to cock-fighting as a sport or pastime. But I cannot help looking at it in another light. It appears to me that, from the very extraordinary circumstances and facts developed in pursuance of the whole system—from the breeding the birds, to bringing them to the pit to fight, as well as their conduct in the fight—it must have been intended to excite the curiosity, and promote the researches, of man in the wonderful operations of nature; if not, in this individual instance, to serve as an example to be imitated in certain situations in life. For instance, consider the form of what we so properly call the gamecock: he is not only, as you have described him, composed of little else but muscle and bone; but, looking at his ruddy complexion, his full breast, his lofty neck, the strength of the beam of his leg, and length of his thigh, his large quick eye, and strong beak—crooked and big at its setting on—and his murderous spurs, it is evident that he was intended to

fight. But why so?—why should he be armed with such murderous weapons, and endowed with such formidable strength and courage, merely to protect himself, or his own race, from others of his own race? There can be no reason at all for this in an animal which it is evident was designed to be domesticated. The fact is, *he is born a fighter*, and absolutely begins to spur at an adversary soon after he leaves the egg; at all events, before his spurs are grown. Putting him to fight, then, is not having recourse to a force against nature, but an evident indulgence of his natural propensity, for there can be no offence given to him by the bird pitted against him, which he has never seen till taken out of his bag. This is also proved by the well-known facts, that cocks at their walks, and at full liberty, will seek each other for battle as far as they can hear each other's crowing. In fact, there appears to be in them an insatiable thirst *to destroy each other*, which does not appear in other parts of the creation. We hear of carnivorous animals depopulating the places they frequent of every inhabitant, but there is no instance, except in the cock, of a desire to exterminate their own species.'

'Then you really believe it was intended that the courage of these birds should be displayed to man as an example?'

'I do.'

'And in the method pursued in Bob Dolly's cockpit?'

'Ah, there you press me too hard now. I can only say that, if they do fight at all, the arming them with artificial weapons is the very reverse of cruelty, for the contest is sooner ended, and their sufferings trifling in comparison to what they would have been, had they fought with their own natural weapons, by lacerating and bruising each other in every tender part. And hence may be formed a comparison between the duellist and the pugilist. The duellist meets his adversary like the gamecock, voluntarily, and with artificial weapons also; whereas the pugilist is urged to fight merely by a prospect of gain, and to fight with natural weapons, receiving blows and bruises, frequently to the very point of death, to amuse a crowd of spectators. I am inclined, then, to think that, after all, cock-fighting is one of the least cruel of all our sports in which the lives of animals are put to the risk. But it is not so much the mere act of fighting, and the display of courage in the gamecock, that excite my admiration: it is, as I said before,

the entire system throughout, and the wonderful phenomena that occur in breeding and training these birds. We will commence with the breeding, and the importance of similarity of feather. Where is the philosopher who can discover this necessity?—but so it is. Several attempts were made some years back to cross the Cheshire piles with piles from other countries, and those of great note; but, from a trifling dissimilarity of feather, the breed was very inferior to the original one. But even in the Cheshire piles, the necessity arises of not mixing the dark and light-coloured ones together. Then, again, the fidelity with which uniformity of colour is preserved is no less astounding. A celebrated breeder of cocks thus writes on this subject:—"Fifteen years or more I had enjoyed an invariable production of the most complete black-reds bred by any amateur, without a single instance of deviation during that period; but, on the sixteenth year, I had several light piles in one hatch. No change of eggs could possibly have taken place, nor was there a shadow of doubt of interference with any other cock. A well-regulated account of my cocks, however, enabled me to ascertain that there had been a pile in the cross five years previous to my having them from Shropshire; *so that they held highly regular for twenty-one years,* not only in plumage, but in every desired requisite.

'It appears,' continued Hargrave, 'that, had this breeder gone on in a deviation from the original colour, he would have had spangles, as party-coloured fowls are called; but, by persevering afterwards in selecting the darkest-coloured fowls, those in fact most resembling his original attachment, or sort, he preserved not only their feather, but their *constitution,* which is a great consideration with cockers. Now here we have an analogy between the florist and the cocker. A run flower is one which has the inherent vice of changing colour, with little chance of regaining its primitive and valuable brilliancy; consequently it is discarded by the florist, as spangled pullets would be by the cocker.

'There are, also, independent of feather, some strange circumstances arising from the selection of the parentage of game fowls, and these of the very same breed, one, in fact, which has been proved to be good in blood, feather, and heel. For example: cocks bred from a father and daughter have run away,

whereas those from a mother and son have stood to be killed by inches.

'Perhaps the best proof of the difficulties of training cocks to fight is to be found in the very few persons who have excelled in this branch of their art. Who would believe it possible that, although a feeder should be able to get a pen of cocks fit to fight for two successive days, he should not be able to have them fit to fight on the third, and yet his competitor on the sod shall be able to do so? This, however, is a very common case. In fact, the whole system of feeding cocks to fight, reducing or increasing their vigour, is one of *consummate* art, and one with which that of training the race-horse can bear no comparison as to the difficulty of it. Then, again, what a true picture of life is a cockpit! Depend upon it, Frank Raby, you will never have seen human nature fully and faithfully displayed in the rough, until you shall have seen it in a cockpit, at such places as Chester, Manchester—in short, anywhere bordering on the north. Amongst noblemen and gentlemen of the highest character and respectability, and who have made cocking their pursuit through life, you will see men of the coarsest exterior, and the meanest garb, outwitting them by odds in their judgment in selecting the winners before the battles commence, and exhibiting indescribable acuteness in discovering injuries afterwards, which, of course, they turn to account before many of their superiors are aware of them. This extreme quickness of sight, by which what is called a "cut throat" is discovered *previously to its effects becoming visible*, is scarcely to be expected from a heavy and dull-looking mechanic—perhaps a blacksmith, or a collier, who may have walked fifty miles to the pit—but such is often the case, and, of course, he reaps his reward by *immediately* backing the other cock.'

'What do you mean by a "cut throat"? I never saw a cock's throat cut in fighting.'

'Nor I neither. It is a body blow, but, having wounded a vital part, is so called from the fact of the blood soon finding its way into the throat, and thence ejected by the mouth, consequently impeding respiration. Cocks *in very high condition* will occasionally "throw it off," as the term is, and go on; but it generally betokens a speedy termination of the battle. The setting or handling of the cocks is also a very difficult art; in

fact, I have no hesitation in saying, that not only does a cock-pit include more natural talent, in the rough, than any other place in which men of all descriptions are given to congregate, but that, unless a man be a man of talent, he has no business to enter one.'

Frank listened attentively to this somewhat philosophical description of cocking and the cockpit, and whether or not he became a cocker will hereafter be shown. He, however, reminded Hargrave that the late Mr. Wyndham—then in the zenith of his reputation, as one of our distinguished senators, and *distinguished also for his humanity*—had given it as his opinion that the conflict between inferior animals incited the courage of a nation; and, in support of his hypothesis, availed himself of the character of the English people, who, he said, have ever been as remarkable for courage, or what is vulgarly called 'pluck,' as for their predilection for such conflicts, cock-fighting especially.

The first public exhibition of our hero, during his residence at Christchurch, was on Burford race-course, in Oxfordshire, on which was held what was called the Bibury meeting, continued (though in very diminished form) to the present time. But these were Bibury's very best days. In addition to the encouragement given to it by the patronage and presence of George IV., then Prince of Wales, who was received by the Earl of Sherborne, for the week, at his seat in the neighbourhood, and who every day made his appearance on the course as a private gentleman, on his favourite cropped roan hack, of which he was as fond as the impetuous Hotspur of his 'crop-ear roan,' which, in an equestrian transport, he called his 'throne,' with merely a groom in attendance, and in familiar conversation with all who had the privilege of addressing him, there was a galaxy of gentlemen jockeys, who alone rode at this meeting, which has never since been equalled. Amongst them were the present Duke of Dorset, who always rode for the Prince; His Grace's brother, the late Hon. George Germain; the late Mr. Delmé Radcliffe—who had the management of His Royal Highness's racing stud, until his decease as George IV.;—the late Lords Charles Somerset and Milsington, and Lord Delamere, then Mr. Cholmondeley; Sir Tatton Sykes, then Mr. Sykes; Messrs. Hawkes, Bullock, Worral, George Pigot, Lindow, Lowth, Musters, Probyn, etc., all first-raters,

Bibury meeting in its palmy days.

and some of them in as constant practice as any of the regular jockeys. And a curious fact may here be mentioned, and of which Frank Raby was a witness. The Prince of Wales had a horse called Ploughater, by Trumpeter, out of an Evergreen mare, and bred by Lord Clermont, which was extremely difficult to ride, from his hard pulling, and awkward position of his head in his gallop. The Duke of Dorset, however, rode him in several successful races, but at length broke a blood-vessel by the exertion. Having lost a great quantity of blood, His Grace did not appear on the course the next day, but on the following one, to the surprise of all persons who saw him, he not only appeared, but insisted upon mounting Ploughater again, who had to walk over the course for a Stakes.

There was something especially jockey-like in the appearance of the Duke of Dorset, his brother Germain, and Delmé Radcliffe, not only when mounted on race-horses, but when seen riding on the course, on their hacks, often with their saddles buckled to their sides, after the manner of the professional men. Indeed, it is much to be doubted whether there was so much as two pounds in weight difference between the performance of that trio, as well as of Mr. Hawkes, and the best of the jockeys in those days. Hawkes's forte was as much making play in running, as in what is called a waiting race, by his excellent judgment of pace. In fact, he was a perfect horseman, either over a course or a country. George Pigot was likewise very good in his saddle, but had not the head of Hawkes in a near race. Sir Tatton Sykes was a second Hawkes, cool, and with a beautiful hand. Of his coolness, perhaps, nothing can beat what I am now about to relate. When riding a match, at York, his horse bolted, and, falling over some rails, he, of course, fell to the ground. His antagonist, having observed the accident, was cantering gently along towards the winning-post, supposing the race to be his own; when, within a few yards of home, he was passed by a horseman, in a coat and hat, who wished him a pleasant ride. This was Sir Tatton, who had borrowed the coat and hat from a bystander, when he fell, and thus deceived his competitor, who mistook him for one of the crowd. So fond was Sir Tatton of riding races, that he has been known to ride a hundred miles for that sole purpose, and return to Yorkshire on his hack immediately on the event being decided. Of Mr. Bullock

—commonly called Nando Bullock, his name having been Orlando—some amusing anecdotes are recorded, in reference to his passion for race-riding. The following is a description of a race he once rode and won:—

'I turned the last post,' said he, '*snug as murder*; now, said I to myself, the pantomime is going to begin, and I think I shall beat Mr. Merryman.' (There was a horse called Merryman in the race, and heavily backed to win.) Again, when he broke his leg and thigh in a race, by his horse running against a post, he absolutely spurred the persons who were carrying him upstairs to bed, with his other leg, so little daunted was he by the mishap. He met his death by an accident, at last, and was much regretted by his friends, for his great good humour.

Lords Charles Somerset, Milsington, and Delamere, rode much at Bibury, and well—Lord Charles Somerset especially—although they were all above the jockey height, as also was Mr. Musters; but Mr. Worral, one of the best of them, was cast in the jockey mould.

But to return to our young sportsman at Oxford. Having engaged a tandem for the purpose, with four of the best gig-horses that the Oxford stables could produce, Frank Raby and his friend Hargrave thus arranged their plans for the approaching Bibury Meeting. They sent two of the horses to Witney, and by thus relieving those that brought them from Oxford, they were enabled to go to, and return from, the course, and be in their college at night—driving alternate stages, for the furtherance of their mutual improvement in this hazardous occupation, as well as for their mutual pleasure; and all went well for the first three days. Having a capital leader over the last ground, who wanted nothing but holding, and keeping his head straight, these aspiring youths dashed through the crowd, threading the carriages and horses on the road, with such skill and dexterity as to attract much notice—and, at length, that of the Prince, who had been watching their manœuvres on the race-course.

'Who are they?' inquired His Royal Highness of Mr. Lake.

'I do not know their names, sir,' replied Mr. Lake, 'but I understand they are Christchurch men.'

'Ask their names,' resumed the Prince; 'they will do, in time, that is to say—*if they don't break their necks.*'

I well remember the scenes at Burford, and all the neighbouring towns, after the races of the day were over. That at Burford beggars description, for, independently of the bustle occasioned by the accommodations necessary for the Club who were domiciled in the town, the concourse of persons, of all sorts and degrees, and all in want of something, was immense. Our young Oxonians, however, had taken care to provide for themselves in this respect; and with a few more collegians, and kindred spirits too, had formed a select party of themselves, and, by paying the piper well, had no reason to complain. But now for the finale to this '*lark*,' I might say, but that word was not used in those days, in this sense, at least. On the last day of the meeting, all having hitherto gone smoothly, an awkward mishap occurred, but which will, in a great measure, be accounted for by the scene that took place when the tandem came to the door with Frank Raby on the *bench*.

'Come along, Hargrave,' said Frank, 'I am sure you have had wine enough; and, as for myself, I can scarcely tell the leader from the wheeler. Besides, you know this mare won't stand much longer ere she begins kicking, and we have only an hour and forty minutes to do the twenty-one miles in.'

'Kick away,' said Hargrave, as he came staggering towards the tandem; 'you know I had rather be upset than not; who cares for a kicker, with a kicking strap over her back, and a good coachman behind her?'

'Many a true word is spoken in jest,' says the proverb; the mare did not kick; but in descending one of those sharp 'pitches,' as they are called by coachmen, between Burford and Witney—which, in those days, were often covered with half-broken stone—and at by far too quick a rate, she stepped on one of them, and fell, and was dragged some distance by the leader. But now for the fate of her driver; he escaped with only some slight bruises, by falling on the mare whilst she was being dragged, and rolling thence to the ground; but Hargrave was not so fortunate. A dislocation of his left shoulder was the result, which, he being a very muscular young man, it required the united strength of four men to reduce—putting him to extreme torture for the time; neither did he speedily recover its effects.

But there is another proverb which applies well here. 'Good comes out of evil'; as it did in this case. Both these young

gentlemen made a solemn vow, on the morrow, that they would never again mount either a tandem or a coach box, at least, not with reins in their hands, when they had drunk too much wine; and, though they became very celebrated as coachmen, and were occasionally put to rather a severe test, they most religiously adhered to their vow.

It was reserved to Hogarth to write a scene of furniture. The rake's levee-room; the nobleman's dining-room; the apartments of the husband and wife, in Marriage *A la mode*; the alderman's parlour; the poet's bed-chamber; and many others, are a history of the manners of the age. Nevertheless, as the furniture and other accompaniments of apartments do, in a great measure, describe the characters of the persons who inhabit them, I will attempt a brief sketch of the rooms occupied by the two Rabys, at Christchurch, as also those of Hargrave.

The apartments of Andrew require only a short notice. A bust of Shakespeare was on one table, and one of Sir Isaac Newton on another; prints of Mr. Pitt and Mr. Fox, and also of Adam Smith, author of the *Theory of Moral Sentiments,* adorned the walls; and a handsome pair of globes were on a side-table, together with a large portfolio of maps and drawings of flowers from nature. On his book-shelves were the best editions of the classics — both in English and in the dead languages — as well as the chief historical works of sundry nations and times. Neither were the rooms in which Frank Raby was domiciled by any means wanting in books, which his uncle had taken care to provide for him, nor were they altogether uselessly bestowed upon him. In fact, he read hard by starts, but wanted the steady application of his brother, which was essential to cutting a figure in the schools, even in those days when examinations were not over-strict. But the ornaments of these rooms were of a very different character to those of his brother; and as the taste and inclinations of men are displayed by such trifles, it will not be amiss to make mention of them.

On his mantel-shelf was a beautiful figure of a race-horse, cast in alabaster, and over it hung the good old-fashioned print of Partner, the race-horse, taking a sweat at Newmarket. That of Hambletonian and Diamond had just then been published, and, of course, was to be found here, as well as in many other rooms in this aristocratic College. The celebrated carriage match of Lord March (afterwards Duke of Queensbury),

over Newmarket Heath, hung *vis à vis* to the match between Meynell's Richmond and Smith Barry's Bluecap, two celebrated foxhounds, over the Beacon course of the same place. The famous prints, 'in caricature,' of Dick Knight and the Pytchley Hunt, were also to be seen, as well as an excellent print of Robert Forfeit, so many years huntsman to the great John Warde. Tom Oldacre, on Brush, just then published, was likewise in the collection; as was Sir Thomas Mostyn's favourite foxhound bitch, Lady, with her whelps, a print that is to this day to be seen in half the public-houses in Oxfordshire. There were likewise paintings of Bonnybell and Tyrant, two favourite harriers in his father's pack; but the deficiency of globes and maps was made up by a plentiful assortment of four-horse and hunting whips, boxing gloves and fishing rods, and sundry other paraphernalia of the sportsman.

Hargrave's rooms were very similarly adorned. Arthur Wentworth, the earth-stopper, was suspended over his fireplace. A Cheshire pile gamecock was above that; and in other parts of his sitting-room were the following well-known prints:—A bitch fox and her cubs, by Sartorius; Humphreys and Mendoza in attitude; the Phenomena trotting mare; a portrait of Eclipse, with John Oakley (the only man who could ride him) on his back; the great Malay cock match; the York 'Highflyer' coach, immortalised by Hogarth; the London and Shrewsbury Mail; Jem Howell, the celebrated coachman of Costar's 'Oxford and Brummagem Day,' as it was then called; portraits of Bill Stuart, and Bob Dolly, with his famous dog Nelson, 'the cock of the Oxford walk'; likewise an excellent picture of Squires Draper and Newby, two celebrated Yorkshire sportsmen, representing them in the grey of the morning, opening the door of the kennel. Among the books were some odd numbers of the 'Racing Calendar'; the first volume of the 'Stud Book,' the only one then published; 'Isaak Walton, on Angling'; 'Peacham's Complete Gentleman'; and some numbers of the 'Sporting Magazine,' a periodical not of much note in those days.

In his bedroom was a good show of whips, both for hunting and for the road, all made by Mr. Crowther of Swallow-street, the crack man of that day, and who sold them for a crack price.

'But *were there not always crack men?*' was the answer

Hargrave made to some one who asked him why he gave a guinea for his four-horse whips, when good ones were to be had for half the sum? 'You may get them cheaper, doubtless, but where will you get them so good? Are there more than two men in England, who can make a really good hunting saddle?' And what else was to be seen in this bachelor's bedroom? why, not much beyond what was commonly found in a gentleman commoner's bed-chamber at this time, whose only object was to find repose from the fatigues of the day, or to shake off the fumes of bad wine. There was, however, a print of a sleeping Venus, suspended against the wall, with some lines of his own written under it, merely expressive of his high admiration of the human form; and, pinned to the curtain of his bed, so as to be visible by him when awake, the words *diluculo exsurgam* legibly written on a slip of white paper. But there was something more than met the eye of a common observer in these words. It was not the mere act of *early rising*, which these words imply, that stood so high in Mr. Hargrave's estimation; the fact was, he found, by experience, that by being what is called 'a good man at morning chapel,' he obtained the credit of being a regular man in his college, whereas, in truth, he was anything but that. Although perfectly free from all vicious propensities, and one of the most popular men at Oxford, at the time, he was what would now be termed 'an out-and-out larker,' and as often broke through the rules and trammels of the University as any other young gentleman of his day on its books.

Carthage is said only to have produced one Hannibal; and great men, in their way, are scarce in all modern communities. At the time I am alluding to, very good horsemen over a country were much more rare than they now are; and there were not more than a dozen in the University of Oxford who were entitled to be called such. The very best among them, however, was Hargrave, who united all the good properties essential to riding well after hounds. He possessed great strength, unaccompanied by great weight, not exceeding twelve stone (fourteen pounds to the stone), with his saddle, which is considered the best of all weights for crossing a strong country, and for this reason: the twelve-stone man, independently of his power to assist his horse, to pull open gates, and knock about obstacles of any sort, is almost sure to be mounted

on a horse worthy to be called a hunter, that is, a horse of power; whereas, your nine or ten-stone sportsman is too often mounted on what is called 'a nice little horse,' to carry his weight; in other words, a cat-legged weed, not worthy the name of hunter, and which gets knocked backwards, or turned heels upward, by a strong grower in a hedge, which the horse of a twelve-stone man would drive before him, or break. Then, to use a vulgar expression, Hargrave had the nerves of a bull-dog, in the field, and would turn from no fence that he considered there was a chance to get over when in chase; but was free from the folly of taking unnecessary leaps, merely to display his horsemanship. And, perhaps, one proof of his good horsemanship may be gathered from this fact,—his horses had both been purchased, at his request, when young and *raw*, as the term is, that he might have the task of making them hunters by his own hand; and capital hunters did he make them, although differing much from each other. *Rupert*, a large-bodied, sleepy-looking bay gelding, about fifteen hands two inches high, with long shoulders and quarters, and short back, standing over a great deal of ground, upon short and large legs; wanting nothing in his mouth except a plain snaffle bit, but requiring spurs in his sides over almost every yard that he went; would leap timber, either flying or standing, according to his rider's pleasure; was one of the best creepers in the world, consequently, seldom got into scrapes; and wanted nothing but a turn more speed to make him one of the best hunters in the world. He was, however, as stout as steel and—no small recommendation to an Oxford man's horse—he could 'come again,' as the grooms say, very quickly, after a hard run, and was good, on the average of sport, for four days in a fortnight; at all events, for three.

Topthorn, his other horse, was an animal of a different description. In the first place, he was better bred; and, in the next, in a form altogether different from *Rupert*. He was what is called an 'up-standing horse,' nearly sixteen hands high; not large-bodied, although an excellent feeder, and with very good legs. As a fencer, he was quite out of the common way, both at height and width, although there was one imperfection in his fencing, from which he derived his name; and here he was the very reverse of Rupert. He was not only not a creeper—much less a standing leaper—but so far from

leaping *into* a fence, as every hunter ought occasionally to do, when required, he could scarcely be made to go near enough to his fences before he rose at them, so great was his dislike to feel a thorn or brier about his legs. His pace was also far better than Rupert's—good enough, indeed, for any country and any hounds; he was capital at both timber and water, and, barring the imperfection which gave him his name, one of the most accomplished hunters of his day. This, indeed, may be inferred from the following rather uncommon fact:—A nobleman, residing in Oxfordshire, but then hunting in Leicestershire, offered him 400 guineas for Topthorn. His answer was laconic, but creditable to him, and may be said to have 'given token of a goodly day to-morrow.'

'I shall not take 400 guineas for my horse,' said this promising young sportsman. 'I am not in debt; and I see no reason why I should not ride a good horse with hounds, as well as his lordship.'

As may naturally be supposed, Hargrave was not only looked to as a pilot in the field, by all the novitiates in the 'noble science' at that time in the University; but Frank Raby, who had been well entered to hounds, previously to his matriculation at Christchurch, looked to him for instruction and improvement. And he need not have gone much farther for instruction: his seat was firm, and altogether good, with his body pliably erect; his feet well out in front; the knee nearly straight, and not bent at an angle by short stirrup-leathers, as it was too often seen in those days; on the contrary, he sat well down upon his fork, with his head up, and, as he said of himself, he rode with a light hand and an easy bit. As for the bay horse, that is to say, Rupert, a child might have almost ridden him to hounds; but it required a horseman to handle Topthorn; and it was from seeing Hargrave's performance on him, that Frank Raby acquired lessons which he never forgot, and which afterwards perfected him in the horseman's art.

In proportion to the number of young men of family and fortune rising up in the world, will be the proportion of the various occupations and pursuits which their several inclinations lead them to engage in. That fox-hunting has ever been, and, it is to be hoped, ever will be one, it is scarcely necessary to add; although, at the time I am alluding to, there were

fewer followers of the chase in the Universities than are to be found in them at the present day. In fact, I have already said there were only about a dozen really good workmen, at this period, at Oxford, who kept hunters during term, and who may be said to have done the thing in a truly workmanlike style throughout. Amongst them was a commoner of Oriel, who accompanied Hargrave and Frank Raby, on a fine morning in the first week in December, to Oddington Ashes, a favourite cover in the Beaufort Hunt; their horses having been sent to Chipping Norton on the preceding evening, the distance from Oxford being upwards of twenty miles.

In those days there were not the crowds of horsemen with hounds, composing what is termed 'the field,' that are now to be seen; but, on the day of which I am speaking, about fifty well-mounted gentlemen and half a dozen farmers were assembled—all having some pretensions to be called sportsmen; in other words, they were met together for very different purposes than riding at, or over, each other, after the manner of our steeple-chase jockeys of these times; and driving hounds over the scent, as if that instinctive agent, called *nose*, was by no means necessary to their pursuing it, to the final accomplishment of their object—the death of a stout fox.

It is unnecessary to relate all the particulars of this day's hunting; suffice it to say, that a fox was soon found, and, after having taken two deep rings in this justly celebrated cover, broke under the most favourable circumstances; namely, with the body of the hounds on the scent, and the horsemen where they should be; not too near, to drive them over the scent, or so far distant from them as to be unable to enjoy them in their work. Still there was one thing unusual in the break. The general run of foxes from Oddington Ashes is, what is called in that country, 'up hill'; that is to say, not down the vale, but either for the woods of Heythrop, or Ditchley, or, as oftentimes, for the forest of Witchwood. Upon this day, however, the fox took a very different course, going straight down the vale for Pain's Furze, near to the town of Moreton-in-Marsh, and thence to Bourton Wood—beyond Bourton-on-the-Hill—now hunted by Lord Segrave. Nor was this regretted by the young Oxonians, although it took them in a contrary direction to their homes. It gave to Frank Raby, and to the commoner of Oriel —whose name, by the bye, was Goodall—an opportunity of

witnessing the fine horsemanship and good judgment of Hargrave, whom they selected as their pilot in as severe a country as hounds often run over. In the first place, they had the Kingham brook to leap, and the Kingham field to cross, which none but good horses can do, and live with hounds when they are going their best pace, as they did in the run I am alluding to. And it told on the horses that crossed it on this day. It reduced the number that started with the hounds to, at most, one third; and the field soon became, what in these days is termed, 'most desirably select.' But the trial of trials was yet to come. There runs through this rich vale a brook called the Evenload—commonly called the Emload—which not more than one man in twenty would ride at, in those days, nor will more than one man in ten get well over it in these. In fact, it is, in many places, all but a *stopper*; in all, a very serious affair for horses a little pumped out by the pace, the banks being far from good, and the water both wide and deep. Now it so happened that, by a lucky turn, Goodall, and a hard-riding parson of that time, arrived first at the brook, and the parson took it in his stroke. Neither did Goodall intend doing otherwise. Taking a good pull at Pineapple (for such was his horse called, in consequence of the deep scoring of his legs, by some merciless operator, with the firing-irons) at about a hundred yards from its banks, he sent him manfully at it, but by not extending himself far enough, he dropped short, and fell backwards, with his rider under him, into the stream!

'He is *in*, by heavens,' exclaimed Hargrave, who saw the mishap, 'and the parson has it all to himself.'

'He'll be smothered,' said Frank Raby; 'what's to be done?'

'Not he,' resumed Hargrave, '*he's clear of his horse*; do you go *quick* at the brook to the right, and I'll go to the left.'

No sooner said than done; both charged it and got over, and six more of the field did the same thing; but it was a trial of nerve to a young one to ride at a place of this description, in which his friend and his horse were floundering, and within twenty yards of him at the time.

No one headed the parson, who kept the lead to the end, the fox having sunk before the pack within a field of Bourton Wood, the earths of which, being open, might perchance have saved his life.

'Well done, *my old college*,' exclaimed the parson, as he saw the two Christchurch men amongst the eleven that were in at the death, and no more appeared until the fox was broken up by the pack, and then only the few who had passed the brook by a bridge.

'But what is become of Mr. Goodall?' was the anxious inquiry of many.

'I saw him safe on the bank,' replied a whipper-in; 'and I told a farmer to send some men to assist his horse, which he promised he would immediately do.' And he was as good as his word. Pineapple was pulled out by a team of horses, not much the worse for his disaster; and when his brother collegians returned to Chipping Norton, where their hacks awaited their arrival, they found the one comfortably dressed in his stall, and the other in the act of finishing a good-sized bowl of *bishop*, which he had swallowed after his luncheon, by way of keeping out the cold, as has ever been the good practice, as well of ancient as of modern times.

CHAPTER VII

A trip to Ascot Races, succeeded by an inquiry into the systems and methods of travelling, from the earliest ages to the golden age of the road in England

On the morning following his arrival in town, Frank Raby received the following letter from his friend, Sir John Inkleton:—

'Stevens's Hotel, Bond Street, June.

'Dear Frank,—

'I arrived in town last night, and hope to see you here to dinner to-morrow at six o'clock. It is of no use asking the old one; he is no company for you and me, for he once told me he could not live with men "whose talk was of bullocks." I twigged what he meant. However, he is not a bad sort of fellow at bottom; and all the harm I wish him is, that he were safely landed in heaven, and you had his money. I think you would make a better use of it than he does, with his *antics*, as old Dick says. I shall ask Jack Webber to meet you, and we will have some coaching talk. The nags are all in town—two rare teams, and two rest horses—ten in all; they will be quite ready for Ascot on Tuesday, when you shall have a seat on the box.

'Believe me, yours ever,

'John Inkleton.

'*P.S.*—I saw Jack Bailey to-day, who spoke of you. By the bye, they were all well at the Abbey when I left home, Andrew making the agreeable to old and young, especially to the Chapmans, but I think Egerton has nailed the youngest, and the eldest won't do at any price. Andrew is an out-and-out slow one, except at Latin, Greek, and the Fathers; and there, Egerton says, he is not easy to beat.'

The hour of six being arrived—there were no eight or nine o'clock dinners in those days—Sir John, his friend Jack Webber, a great amateur coachman, Frank Raby, and Hargrave,

met at Stevens's Hotel, as appointed, and sat down to a dinner of the best of everything, in one of the private rooms. The following was a part of their talk:—

Sir John.—'Well, Jack, glad to meet you once more; what news in town?'

Webber.—'Why, the devil to pay at the "Bull and Mouth." They have got the distemper in the yard, and they have taken Will Brydges off the Shrewsbury "Union," the best coach out of London for a coachman, and put him on the Bristol "Blue." Besides, they talk of docking them all of the short shillings the first stage, in and out, which is not fair, because we all know that London coachmen are at heavier expenses for lodging and food than those who work down in the country.'

Sir John.—'And the "Swan with Two Necks," how go they on there?'

Webber.—'Oh, all right, as regards the nags—never better; but the devil's own work between the "Telegraph" and the "Defiance," on the Manchester road. I saw Bob[1] go out with his coach to-day, and Jack[1] yesterday, both very flash indeed; in short, dressed more like gentlemen than coachmen.'

Sir John.—'And Jack Hale, how is he?'

Webber.—'Never better; and his stock looks as well as he does. He has just accepted the office of secretary to the Benevolent Whip Club, to which several of our friends have subscribed handsomely.'

Sir John.—'An excellent institution that. No class of persons stand more in need of something of the sort, to enable them to fall back upon, in case of illness or accident, to which they are so much exposed, as coachmen and guards do. I shall see Jack when he comes in, to-morrow, and tell him to put down my name for ten guineas a year. I have had no less than three coachmen and two guards invalided at my house in the country, during the last two years, who might not have required my assistance had they been members of the "Benevolent Club."'

Webber.—'I suppose you have seen Jack Bailey, as his coach came in about two hours ago?'

Sir John.—'Of course I did, and showed him, *by his own watch*—at least, by the one which once was his—how, to a

[1] Bob Snow, formerly on the Brighton road, and Jack Marchant, who died landlord of the 'Greyhound Inn,' at Newmarket.

minute, he had kept his time. "It's a wonder I did, Sir John," said Jack, "for the roads be in a queerish state, after that 'ere thunder-storm yesterday; and there is at least half a ton of Birmingham shillings in the front boot." All the better for the way-bill, said I; and as for the bad shillings, as Jack observed, that 's nothing to nobody; all trades must live, and we are all honest men till we are found out.'

At this moment the door opened, and in walked Frank Raby.

Sir John.—'Frank! my boy, how are you?—glad to see you once more; let me introduce you to Mr. Webber, an old Etonian and Christchurch man; like ourselves, devilish fond of the road, a right good coachman, but not much of a fox-hunter.'

Webber.—'Happy to make your acquaintance, Mr. Raby. Inkleton tells me you are *one of us*; fond of the ribbons, eh? Bailey says you were one of his best pupils when at Eton, and Jack Hale says there are few better out of Oxford—gownsmen, of course.'

Frank.—'I am very fond of driving four horses, but do not pretend to call myself a coachman. If I make one in *five* years from this time, I shall think myself very fortunate.'

Webber.—'It cost me ten, and as many hundreds of pounds as well. My bill, with old Mother Jones, at Oxford, for box-coats for guards and coachmen, was never under a hundred per annum, for many years; and I am afraid to say what it has cost me in four-horse whips, also given away. Then my score at public-houses, on different roads, was something approaching fifty pounds a year for what coachmen and guards call their "allowance." For example, that at the "Magpies," on Hounslow Heath, for rum-and-milk to the mail coaches, up and down, was no joke—generally exceeding twenty pounds. No house on the road makes such capital rum-and-milk as the "Magpies" does; the coachmen call it "milking the bull." But I don't regret the money I spent in this way, for many reasons. It gave me an insight into all sorts of life; it made me a coachman, which nothing but road-work will do; it gave me an opportunity of doing many a kind act towards persons who were not so fortunately cast in life as myself; and last, though not least—for I never encouraged what I considered a worthless fellow, or a blackguard—I have reason to believe I have con-

tributed, with others, equally fond of the ribbons as myself, towards the commencement of a new era amongst coachmen and guards. From the notice taken of them by gentlemen, they appear to be endeavouring to make themselves worthy of their regard and protection; and if such should prove the case, I shall never regret the many hundred guineas they have received from me. Neither is the obligation all on one side. I have been indebted to them for much amusement, which I could not have enjoyed but with their permission; and it must be remembered that they gave me that permission at the risk of losing their places. But you are very fond of hunting, as well as driving, Mr. Raby. I know all about you from Hargrave, who is the son of a friend of my father's, and a really good fellow too.'

Frank.—'I am very fond of both; but am afraid I shall not be able to enjoy them, or even one of them, in perfection.'

Webber.—'And why not?'

Frank.—'I shall not be able to afford the expenses. I fear I shall not be content with the common run of countries, after what I have heard of Leicestershire and Northamptonshire; and, fond as I am of road-work, I should like to have a team of my own.'

Webber.—'Oh! no fear. By what I have heard, from Hargrave and others, you have a rich old uncle, at whose death you will succeed to a very large property, chiefly in money, and that the worthy gentleman is not likely to be long-lived. That being the case, you will not want for money in this town of London, for there are plenty of money-lending rascals who will advance you what sum you may require on your expectations. Besides, no doubt, your father will leave you a good——'

Sir John.—'Hold hard, there, Webber; I don't like the post-obit system at all. Remember what happened to Newland, who was at Oxford with me. Besides, although I think it very probable that Raby's father will leave our young friend the Hopewell estate, which is not entailed, you must be aware that his expectations from his uncle are merely expectations. It is still possible he may marry, and have children, which, of course, *Moses* would take into the calculation; in which case, the raising money by post-obit would be most ruinous.'

Webber.—'What happened to Newland? he was after my time at College, and I never heard anything about him in the money way; but I know he was very fond of racing, and used to say that, from his great talent for calculation, he expected to make a fortune by the turf.'

Sir John.—'He lost £100,000, at least, by talking of post-obiting his aunt. He called out, publicly, in the ring at Newmarket, "*What odds will any one bet me, that I don't win the Derby, in four years after my old aunt dies?*" This was mentioned, in his own neighbourhood, as a mere joke; but on its being conveyed to the ears of the old lady, by the parson of the parish in which she lived, and, of course, commented upon for its enormity, he was left £100 to purchase a mourning suit and a ring. Now, for what I know of Mr. Beaumont Raby, he would be very likely indeed to pursue the same plan by a nephew who might post-obit him.'

Webber.—'And did the parson get the £100,000?'

Sir John.—'No, thank God! it was left chiefly to hospitals and Sunday-schools; but poor Newland has never held up his head in the world since. It is a good lesson to all young gentlemen who attempt to post-obit their relations. If, however, my young friend here wants the means of keeping an extra hunter or two, during his uncle's lifetime—for I am quite sure he will not need assistance afterwards—I will take care he shall be supplied with them, without having recourse to a usurious money-lender. But Frank, my good fellow, don't get much into debt, if you can help it. Some of my acquaintance have never recovered the effects of debt contracted early.'

Webber.—'True; but I think the fault there often lies with the old ones. Every father ought to ask his son, when he quits the University, what debts he has left unpaid? when, by a *speedy* arrangement of them, future expenses and extortion, and, in no few cases, ruin to the contractor of them, would be avoided. They hang like an *incubus* upon a man, who is not able to discharge them at the time, and often cause him to be reckless in his future proceedings. By the bye, I can tell you a good anecdote on this subject, and it relates to an intimate friend of mine, a fellow commoner, of Trinity College, Cambridge. Two years after he quitted the University, he

accompanied his father to one of the Newmarket Meetings—all of which he attended—and was thus addressed by him at its close:—"I have lately seen, in my letter-bag, a considerable number of letters, addressed to you, bearing the *Cambridge* post mark, which leads me to believe you have some scores left unpaid in that town, in spite of the handsome allowance you received from me. However, as you spent your money in good society, and left a fair name behind you in the College, I shall freely forgive you, if my suspicions prove to be just. To-morrow morning, then, we will breakfast at Cambridge, on our return to town; and if, in two hours after our arrival there, you will give me a list of *the entire* of your debts, they shall all be embodied in one cheque, at sight." My friend was placed in rather a trying position. The *entire* of his debts—and his father laid strong emphasis on the epithet—amounted to above £800, a sum greatly exceeding, as he thought, his liberal father's expectations! Then what was to be done? To have given in a mutilated list would have been deceiving himself, by deceiving his father; so he took courage, and boldly gave in the aggregate amount. His generous parent took his cheque-book from his pocket, and having drawn on his banker for the required amount, never afterwards mentioned the subject in the presence of his son!'

Sir John.—'And what effect had all this on your friend?'

Webber.—'The best possible effect; he has been a prudent man ever since. But, speaking of old college friends, let me ask you, Raby, how you like my friend Hargrave.'

Frank.—'Very much, indeed; he is my most particular ally. He is supposed to be the best horseman and sportsman, combined, in the University; and, in every respect, a good fellow.'

Webber.—'And don't you like Topthorn and Rupert?'

Frank.—'The best horses in Oxford.'

Sir John.—'Barring Achilles and the General, Frank; but I suppose your modesty induces you to place those of your friend first?'

Frank.—'They are generally first in the field, Sir John.'

Sir John.—'That may be; Hargrave is an older hand than you are over a country; but, with equal men upon them, I should be inclined to back Achilles against Topthorn in a severe run.'

Frank.—'He has not got the speed of him, Sir John; neither do I think Achilles can cover so large a fence.'

Sir John.—'Well, Frank, I commend your candour—I may say, your sincerity; for, as I purchased the horses for you, you might have compromised truth for politeness' sake. As I detest a boaster, I sincerely commend you for what you have said; and now, if you please, we will sit down to our soup.'

In the course of the evening, the arrangements for attending Ascot Races were thus stated by Sir John:—

'I shall send one team to Staines, where it will remain during the meeting; so that we shall go and return on each day, which will add much to our amusement; and I think our party will be a pleasant one: at all events, I will do my best towards making it such, and have given orders that a good dinner, for eight, shall await us every day, at the "Bush"; so that we shall have the road clear for us on our return to town, and travel in the cool of the evening, when the crowd of cockneys will be dispersed.'

It is not worth while to enter into the detail of an Ascot Meeting, so long passed by as this is; but, as may easily be imagined, the splendour of the scene, unrivalled in the world, made a deep impression upon our hero. Neither was it the scene alone, in which the enthusiastic reception of the Royal Family formed a principal and pleasing feature, that impressed his mind. He saw racing to perfection. He saw the performance of the best horses and the best jockeys of the day; amongst the latter, the famous Samuel Chifney, and John Arnull, both riding for the Prince of Wales; Tom Goodison, and others of equal Newmarket celebrity; as also Billy Pierce, as he was called, the noted Yorkshire jockey, then riding for His Grace of Cleveland, at that time Lord Darlington. But we must not forget Dennis Fitzpatrick, imported from Ireland by Lord Clermont, who was at that period in the height of practice, but whose life was cut short by catching cold in wasting. Frank Raby's admiration of these men, as also of the horses on which they distinguished themselves, the best, perhaps, of their day, at all events very superior to any he had ever seen before, was almost boundless; and he would, now and then, ask himself the question:—'Shall *I* ever make a figure on this course?' The answer to which, he

must be aware, depended upon various circumstances, quite beyond his control, although within the range of speculation.

On the first morning of the meeting—a beautiful one in June—and at the hour of ten o'clock, Sir John's team was at the door of Stevens's Hotel, and nothing could be more correct in its appointments. The coach was a bright yellow, neatly picked out with black, and a plain crest on the upper door-pannel. The mountings were, of course, of brass, to suit the furniture of the harness; there were roof-irons to the front roof, which held three persons, and a comfortable dickey behind, to carry the two servants. The box was likewise on the true coaching principle, made to sail forwards towards the wheel-horses, with a good roomy footboard, and well-cushioned seat, allowing plenty of elbow-room for two. The horses were dappled greys, which did credit to all parties; first, to their owner, for the selection of them; next, to the men who had the care of them; for the white hairs on their bodies were as white as the driven snow, and their harness equally well polished. But Sir John's order for *soap* was unlimited, one severe tax on the use of grey coach-horses; and it is said he never grumbled if the year's bill for that purifying article did not exceed £100!

The party assembled on this occasion, and the arrangement of them about the coach, were as follows:—Frank Raby, according to promise, on the box (the word 'bench' was not in use in those days), by the side of his friend; on the roof, Lord Edmonston, Captain Askham, and Hargrave, whom our hero had introduced to his friend, who kindly offered him a seat: inside were two friends of the baronet's, non-coaching men, and an old and warm relation, who promised to pay for the champagne, both on the course and at dinner, for the four days of the meeting, on condition that he was not upset, either in going or returning.

Now, of the majority of this party it is not necessary to say much. Lord Edmonston, Hargrave, our hero, and his friend, have already been before the public; and the insides, on this occasion, were good and worthy gentlemen in their line, but of no pretensions in ours. There was, however, one conspicuous character on the way-bill, which must not be passed over, inasmuch as his career in life, up to a certain period of it, is, we may presume, without a parallel in the

line in which he figured. This is Captain Askham, holding his commission in one of our heavy dragoon regiments, whose history is nearly this:—

At the age of twenty-one, he succeeded to an estate, the clear rental of which was £8000 a year, and a considerable sum of ready money as well, he having been for several years a minor. His passion was, *the road*; he had never less than three, often four, teams at work at the same time; and at one period, when quartered at the distance of nearly 100 miles from London, had the ground absolutely 'covered,' as the term is, among coach proprietors, with his own horses, and amused himself and his friends by driving his coach between London and the town in which he was quartered, whenever his inclination prompted him. The pace, as may be imagined, was an awful one; I allude not to the rate at which the drag travelled, but to that at which the cash found its exit out of the Captain's pocket; for champagne, at sixteen shillings a bottle, was the ordinary 'allowance' on the road, to say nothing for the *et ceteras* in London. But, *nil violentum est perpetuum*, there was soon a stop to those proceedings; and here is the best part of the story, which cannot fail to create a smile. The Captain, like our hero, had a rich uncle, own brother to his father; and having made his fortune in trade, was the more readily alarmed at the accounts he heard of his coaching nephew's proceedings, especially so on finding that his bills and bonds were in the market, with a rumour, now and then, that even expectations from himself, at his decease, were anticipated in his dealings with the money-lending crew.

'Now something must be done,' said the uncle to himself, 'to save this nephew of mine from perdition; perhaps the best step I can take will be to surprise him in his folly, and at once convince him of its consequences.' Acting upon this suggestion, he put himself into the mail; and hearing, on his arrival in London, where his nephew was then domiciled for the week, namely, at a celebrated and most expensive inn, not fifty miles from London, the following *éclaircissement* took place on his entering the stable-yard of the same:—

'Whose coach is that?' said he to a man having the appearance of a helper in a stable. 'Captain Askham's, sir,' was the reply. 'And *that*?' continued the uncle. 'Captain Askham's, sir,' answered the helper. 'And that

LET US
PUT HORSES

"All Captain Askham's, sir."

LET
POST HORSES

break?' 'The Captain's, sir.' 'And that travelling chariot?' 'The Captain's, sir.'

Then turning into a stable in which there were six fine coach-horses—'Whose horses are these?' was the question put to another helper. 'Captain Askham's, sir.' 'And *these*?' resumed the old gentleman, on finding six more in another stable. 'Captain Askham's, sir.' 'And *these*?'—ditto repeated —in a third. 'Captain Askham's, sir.' 'And pray whose *bear* is that?' inquired the uncle of another man, whose path he crossed in the yard. 'Captain Askham's, sir.' 'And the *monkey*?' 'The Captain's, sir.' 'My God!' exclaimed the uncle; 'and pray where is the Captain himself?' 'A-bed, in the house,' answered his informant. 'Let me see him, then,' resumed the old one; 'show me the way to his room.'

The sequel to this story is short. The uncle addressed his nephew with—'I am just come in time to save you from a jail. In six months more you will be in one. I will advance what is requisite to discharge your debts, on your assigning to me the rental of your estate, until they are all liquidated; and, in the meantime, I will allow you two thousand pounds a year.' The Captain consented to this proposal. He retired to his seat in a distant country, 'to *starve*,' as he expressed himself, 'on two thousand a year'; but by good management, the general result of dearly-bought experience, he contrived to live very much like a gentleman, and to indulge himself in his favourite passion for the road, but only to the extent of one coach, and one team of tolerably good greys. In a few years his encumbrances were paid off; he once more became the receiver of his own rents, and no man made a better use than he did of eight thousand a year, cutting his coat according to his cloth, and having nothing more to do with either monkeys or bears.

It is scarcely necessary to observe, that this party had not long passed through Hyde Park turnpike, before the subject of *hunting* formed a part of their discourse. It was commenced by Sir John himself, with some questions put to Lord Edmonston, whom he had not seen, until that morning, since the hunting season had concluded.

'Well, Edmonston,' said Sir John, 'what have you been doing this season in Leicestershire? I mean since Christmas,

because Somerby, who has been visiting his friends in our part of the world, told me what you had done previously to that time. I dare say you have had good sport, as the season has been open, and there have been no complaints of want of scent.'

'We have done very well indeed,' replied his lordship, 'and old Meynell has been in high force, having killed forty-one brace of foxes, about his usual amount, and had capital runs with many of them.'

'Perhaps you will give us the history of one of them,' resumed Sir John. 'It will be highly amusing to our two young friends here, giving them an insight into what they hope, one day or another, to partake of.'

'I will do so with pleasure,' was the answer; 'and I think the Shoby Scoales run, on New Year's Day, will answer your purpose well.

'Shoby Scoales is situated in the finest part of Leicestershire; and, being a sure find, the announcement of the fixture always brings out a large field. There was, on this day, a splendid field of horsemen; and, what added to the animating scene, a brilliant display of ladies in carriages and on horseback, the morning being unusually mild for that season of the year.

'At a quarter past ten o'clock, the hounds were thrown into the cover, in which they had not long been before Champion, a favourite old hound, and noted for finding his fox, challenged on a scent, and was instantly cheered by Mr. Meynell. "Have at him, Champion, old boy!" he holloaed; "*you never told me a lie!* Get round to the lower side of the cover, Jack," said he to Jack Jones, the cork-legged whip, and stop his breaking there, for I want to have a *tickler* to-day." No sooner said than done. The fox broke up wind, and faced our best country, viewed by the whole field. Of course we were all ready for a start, but were kept in check by Meynell taking off his cap and holloaing—"Hold hard, gentlemen; pray let my hounds get fairly out of cover, and settle well to the scent, and *then* ride over them if you can." We were, however, a very short time kept in suspense; for the gallant pack were not only too well bred, but too well taught, to hang in cover after their game had left it. They were soon out in the open, with the scent so good, that, dropping their sterns

"He's among the dead!"

and raising their heads, away they went, at such an awful pace, that we might have safely taken Meynell at his word, and *ridden over them, if we could* have done so. In fact, the first quarter of an hour was so fast, than ten minutes more would have brought us all to a stand-still. At Ragdale, however, we came to a check, the hounds having a little overrun the scent, from the fox turning short to the left, which gave our horses some relief. A judicious cast soon put us to rights again, and away we went, at our former speed, to Hoby Town; and straight from thence to Frisby Gorse, where, fortunately, we once again came to a check; for the pace and the country were both awfully severe. Many of the horses, indeed, had already declined, and two received their eternal quietus, from meeting with accidents at fences.

'Our fox hung just long enough in Frisby Gorse to give the horses that were up, second wind, and away we went again, up to Haines's Gorse, near Great Dalby, at a slashing pace; thence, over a splendid country, to Gadsby, when John Raven caught view of him, in a large grass field, with almost every hound close at his brush. He contrived, however, to reach the fence; and, slipping short down wind, got amongst some old farm buildings in a village, and once more brought the pack to check. The scent was again recovered, by some masterly casts of the "old one," who never appeared to greater advantage as a superior judge of fox-hunting, than he did on that day. After forty minutes' cold hunting, we found ourselves close to Queenborough village, with very little apparent chance of again getting near to this most gallant fox, when one of the most singular circumstances occurred that was ever recorded in the annals of English fox-hunting.

'Every one who knows Meynell is aware of his invincible perseverance in doing everything that can be done towards killing his fox: and in this case he was determined not to give the smallest chance away. It occurred to him, that our fox had either got into a drain, or entered some out-building, in the village of Queenborough, which determined him on once more trying to recover him. He, therefore, walked his hounds quietly among the houses, and, as he passed the church, two or three couples of his hounds entered the yard. Amongst these was our friend Champion, who almost instantly threw

his tongue on a scent. "*He is among the dead!*" exclaimed Meynell; and, putting his horse to the wall, he rode over it in his usual cool and beautiful style. The fox had actually taken possession of a newly-made grave, from out of which he jumped apparently as fresh as when first found; afforded us another burst, exceeded by pace and severity of country only by that from Frisby Gorse to Haines's, in the morning, and quite fast enough to satisfy any one. In fact, he went from Queenborough nearly to Syston; when, crossing the Leicester road, and charging the river Soar in his course, we ran into him close to the windmill on the hill, within a few hundred yards of Mount Sorrel Town; and thus ended one of the finest runs ever seen in that or any other country, it having consisted of every description of hunting, and of every description of difficulties, which could put the goodness and condition of hounds, the science of their huntsman, the bottom of the horses, and the nerves and judgment of their riders, to the test.

'Were I to relate all the disasters and casualties that occurred on this memorable day,' resumed Lord Edmonston, 'I should make my story too long; and I wish I could conclude it without stating that several horses died in consequence of it. I must, however, mention one circumstance relating to the far-famed master of the pack. After we had been going for at least three-quarters of an hour, and at the best pace, with our horses not a little the worse for it, all of us who were up with the hounds at that moment made for the corner of a large grass-field, near Dalby, which was surrounded by an immense ox-fence, and particularly strong in that one particular part. We were assured, however, that the gate in the corner would open, and this by that good old sportsman, Henton of Hoby, who said he had passed through it that morning; but we found, to our cost, there was no longer a gate there. It had been broken to pieces by some bullocks, and replaced with a flight of rails so high and so strong as to bring all the leading men to a standstill. In fact, we were turning away from it in despair, looking for a practicable place in the ox-fence, when Meynell, mounted on his famous old grey horse, came up; and, without breaking his stride, leaped it in the most beautiful style imaginable, leaving us all in the lurch, for a time, not one having the nerve to follow him, although the hounds

were a field or two a-head, running with a breast-high scent at the time.'[1]

With the exception of the Captain, who cared nothing about hounds, and whose attention was chiefly attracted to the movements of the four greys, and the masterly style in which they were handled by their driver, this interesting description of a run with Mr. Meynell's hounds, together with the extraordinary incidents which occurred in it, was listened to with much delight; more especially by the two young ones, who glanced a significant look at each other, towards the conclusion of it, as much as to say, '*That is the country, and those are the hounds for us.*' Sir John, indeed, began to reflect whether he were not pursuing a losing game by keeping six hunters in his own country instead of twice six in Leicestershire, and enjoying fox-hunting *in perfection.* But there were reasons which more than counterbalanced this very strong inducement on his part. Independently of a wish to reside on his own property, in compliance with the death-bed request of his father, his passion for the road quite equalled that for the chase, and for this purpose he could nowhere be so well situated as at home, for reasons that have already been detailed.

But to return to the journey down the road. The first stop was at Hounslow, where, according to the usage of those days —slow compared with the present—the bearing reins were let down, and the noses of the horses plunged into a bucket of cold water, with a swallow or two each, and most refreshing must it have been to them, after toiling through ten miles of dust, for there were no watered roads in those days. A glass of sherry and a biscuit were also partaken of by the party, and onward they proceeded towards the course. At the point at which the roads branch off—just outside of the town of Hounslow—the Baronet exclaimed, pointing to the Oxford finger-post:—

'That is my old road. There are *my* old associations'; and, turning himself round towards Hargrave, and afterwards towards his young friend on the box, he added, 'there, no doubt, are yours also. There stands the "Magpies" on the heath, where I first milked the bull, and there is to be seen Jack Bailey, my faithful friend and preceptor, coming up with his coach; and an out-and-out coachman he is. And next, old

[1] This is a fact.

Baldwin of Slough, whose books were always as open to me as his house, whose tick was as good as his wine was bad. Then, passing by Eton—for I was sick of that place, and all its host of learned tyrants—what can beat old Shrubb,[1] at Benson, and a good dinner in No. 3? But I am not going to stop there. Can I forget Christchurch, and the happy days I passed within its walls? They never have been surpassed by any others, and I more than doubt whether they ever will be. I am now, however, travelling in a new direction, and shall meet with none but new faces on the road. But so it is: and there are the nags all ready for us in the street, and we will change quickly, that we may get a good place on the course.'

Not ten minutes had elapsed before they were off again, having ordered a dinner at the 'Bush' to be ready for them on their return, some particular dishes having been bespoke by the *insides*. 'What a splendid team you have got here, Inkleton,' said the Captain, as they threw themselves into their collars, in ascending the hill out of Egham, appearing to regard the weight of the carriage and its contents as nothing more than was just necessary to the full development of their great powers and form. In fact, on the flat between the two towns, it was as much as Sir John could do to restrain their ardour, so redundant did they feel themselves of high keep and mettle.

'They ought to be good,' replied the Baronet; 'those leaders cost me two hundred guineas apiece, and the wheelers more than two-thirds of that sum. There will be nothing on the road to-day that can touch them, if they would settle down to the trot, but, from the effect of the excitement of a race-course, so new to them, there is little chance of their doing so. All I can hope for, is, that they will not break away with me, on our return from the ground; but I have little fear of it, as my tackle is good.'

On entering Windsor great park—one of the grandest the world can show—the conversation was resumed about Eton, whose 'antique towers' were now visible to the party; and to those who had been educated there some old associations presented themselves.

'Yonder is the old shop,' said the Baronet to Hargrave.

[1] The landlord's name, at the head inn.

'Yes,' replied Hargrave, 'and I never wish to be nearer to it than I now am.'

'Nor I neither,' observed Frank Raby.

'I have no great fancy for the place myself,' added the Baronet, 'but I should like to see old Stevens and Jack Hall once more.'

'By the bye,' resumed Hargrave, 'did you hear of the good bit of luck Jack Hall dropped into the other day?'

On the Baronet replying in the negative, Hargrave thus related the story:—

'When Hobart left school, at Christmas, the Doctor and his tutor, from a knowledge of the large possessions that awaited him on his majority, of course expected a very handsome *pouch*; and it is not improbable that the amount had been duly communicated to, and approved of by, the latter. Whether the doctor was popular with Hobart is extremely problematical; but that a certain person, named Jack Hall, was highly so, there was no room to doubt. The money for the *pouch*, then, arrived in a letter to Hobart himself, the distribution of which involved him in no small difficulty. The result, however, was this:—On the one hand, the chief educational assistance he had received from the doctor consisted of manifold unmerciful floggings, and without being much the better for them; whereas, on the other, through the affectionate assiduities of Jack Hall, he had been rendered a match for any man on the Thames, in the use of a casting-net, or the management of a boat or a punt; and could heel and handle a cock with all the dexterity of a professor. In point of fact, it was a simple case of flogging *versus* cock-fighting, net-casting, and boating. Taking into consideration, then, the 'value received' from either party, and, after the most mature deliberation, Hobart decided that the money ought to be divided in equal portions between the three—the doctor, the private tutor, and the professor of arts and sciences, which Jack Hall must be allowed to be. And now for the finale. This upright division of the money would never have been known to the family had they not chanced to have been made acquainted with it through an unlooked-for channel, when all was put straight between the parties. The deficiency to the pedagogues was rectified, as it ought to have been; but Jack retained his share, on the well-known principle of his profession—that all was fish which came into his net.

The former—the pedagogues—returned suitable acknowledgments for all favours. The Doctor presented Hobart with a splendidly bound edition of the moral Lucretius; and Jack Hall invited him, with his friends, to a flash dinner "up town."'

'Capital!' exclaimed the Captain; 'we had none of that work at Harrow; but I think, from my experience of them, most schoolmasters would get monkey's allowance if left to the generosity of their pupils alone to reward them, although I do not see why they should; as, after all, they only do their duty towards them, although many of them are, like young coachmen, too fond of the whip. As for myself, I had rather be a horse-keeper to the Holyhead mail than a schoolmaster; and does not somebody say, "*Quem Jupiter odit pedagogum facit*"? But, Inkleton, when speaking of Oxford, and the fun you had there in our time, you appear to have forgotten Jem Howell, and the "Birmingham Day," one of the best of his order, out of the University, and Costar's favourite servant.'

'Forget Jem Howell!' exclaimed the Baronet; 'you might as well suppose I should forget to eat my dinner to-day at the "Bush." I consider Jem quite a pattern-card of a stage-coachman, both in figure and dress; and he appears as if he were made on purpose to meet a north-east wind, with the thermometer at zero, over those Oxfordshire hills. Then, what a voice he has! —what an eye!—in fact, what an expressive countenance throughout, under that broad-brimmed hat!'

'That was not much amiss of Jem, the other day,' said Hargrave, 'respecting the new Bishop of Oxford. "I wish they'd gin (given) it *Oolly*," said Jem (the gentleman's name was *Woolley*); "he'd have made a rare bishop, for he 's not only a scholard, but a gemman, and that 's more than can be said of all on 'em. They tells me scholardship opens men's minds; it may be so, but it shuts their purses devilish close—at least I find it so on this road. I never remember getting more than one shilling from a passenger in black, in a shovel hat, but once since I have drove this coach." But it is Jem's very dry manner of expressing himself,' resumed Hargrave, 'that gives a zest to these trifling stories; in fact, they would not be worth repeating without it. I saw an old woman go up to him, the other morning, in Oxford, and say to him, "Be you a-going to Brummagem to-day, Master Howell?" "No, ma'am," replied

Jem; "but I shall go half way there, and my fellow servant will take you the other half if you want to go there; but mind ye, ma'am (looking upwards towards the sky), *if it don't rain.*" "And will it rain, Master Howell?" asked the silly old woman. "There is only *one* person in the world ma'am, that can answer that question," replied Jem, "and I ar'n't he."'[1]

'He booked his passenger, I conclude,' observed Frank Raby.

'Of course he did,' resumed Hargrave; 'for Jem never throws a chance away; and I saw a good scene with him, in that respect, last term. It being a very wet morning, a passenger put his head out of one of the windows of the "Angel Inn," and said, "Where is the coachman of the Birmingham Day?"

'"I be here, at your sarvice, sir," answered Jem, who was buckling his reins, at the moment, just ready to mount his box and be off.

'"Put some straw on the foot-board, on my side of the box," resumed the gentleman.

'"Beg pardon, sir," continued Jem; "but I never allows no straw on my foot-board."

'"You are an insolent scoundrel!" exclaimed the gentleman.

'"This, sir, is not the first time I have been told so," resumed Jem; "but the fact is, I have a mare at wheel, in this here coach, that, if one single straw touched her tail, would kick you off the box in about two seconds; and here is my master, who will vouch for the truth of what I have been saying."'

[1] This anecdote can only be appreciated by those who are aware of the troublesome, stupid questions put by the travelling public to road-coachmen. This woman knew Howell drove the Oxford and Birmingham day coach six days in the week, as well as he himself did; so that the question was put merely for the sake of asking it, as many others are. Howell's questions, on the other hand, were always to the point; and that put to his master, Mr. Costar, relating to the coach he had so long been driving, is a fair sample:—'*Do you think, sir, my coach would be missed on the road if it did not start to-day?*' Mr. Costar agreed with Jem in thinking it would not; and it stopped. The fact was, the coaches running throughout, from London to Birmingham, in a day, took most of its passengers. It is much to be lamented that there is no portrait of this excellent servant, and true specimen of the old road-coachman, an order of men soon only to be known to have existed. He died worth £10,000, and as one proof of the estimation in which his character as a confidential and honest servant was held, Mr. Ansley, of Bletchington Park, kept a horse in Oxford for his use in the summer; and a knife and fork were always at his service in the steward's room at Bletchington, on Sundays, the year round.

To attempt to detail the events of a race meeting, so far back as the one to which I am now alluding, would be considered a trespass on the reader; suffice it to say, that all went off with *éclat*, as far as the sport on the course was concerned; and as the champagne of the week was paid for by the warm old gentleman inside, all went on well with the drag. The party arrived each night at Stevens's hotel as the clock struck eleven, so exactly did the Baronet keep his time; and both men and horses appeared the better for their four days of inhaling clear country air.

But what impression did the events of the week make upon the youngsters of this party—Frank Raby and Hargrave? Upon the latter, not much. His heart and soul were wrapped up in fox-hunting, and 'closely stopped,' as fox-hunters say, against the intrusion of meaner pursuits, amongst which he reckoned racing. Not so, however, with our hero. He appeared to enter into the spirit of each individual race with an interest that attracted notice; and, on the third day, was seen taking some bets in the ring, although only to a trifling amount; and most of these, as might be expected, he lost. But his speculations did not end with the turf. The introduction of the thimble-rig tables had just then commenced, and Hargrave and himself were amongst the earliest victims to their unfairness.

'What!' said one to the other, 'can that simple-looking country bumpkin, in a smock-frock, find out the pea, and neither you nor I be able to do the same? Why, he has won seven guineas already from the rascals, and how I should like to break them, for they look very much like thieves.'

'There will be no difficulty in it,' observed the other; 'I see the pea every time, and I am quite sure I can always tell the thimble it is under. We will risk five guineas apiece, and I'll warrant it we'll soon double our stakes.'

But they were interrupted in their course by a by-stander, who overheard them, and who, apparently in compassion to their simplicity, thus ventured to address them:—

'Excuse me, young gentlemen,' said he, 'but you have formed a wrong judgment as to the proceedings you have just been witness of. That simple-looking country bumpkin, in the smock-frock, is one of the partners in the table, as well as one of the greatest thieves in London. He is acting the part of a

decoy, and you will be sure to fall into his net, if you risk your money on the tables.'

The youngsters thanked their unknown friend, and kept their money in their pockets. He also cautioned them against playing at the various Rouge et Noir and E. O. tables on the course, assuring them they were all unfair, and that they would not have a chance to win at them. It was discovered, afterwards, that it was one of the police-officers of Bow-street who had acted this friendly part, having seen the young gentlemen come on to the course with Sir John Inkleton, to whom he owed a debt of gratitude, for a kind act done by him, in getting him put on the establishment, through the intercession of one of his relations.

During the four days of the meeting, Frank Raby and his host never chanced to meet. When the one came home at night, the other had not returned from his club—for he was a member of both Brooks's and White's—and when the nephew started for Ascot in the morning, the uncle was asleep in his bed. The first time, however, that they met, which was on the fifth morning, at the breakfast-table, the following conversation occurred:—

'Well, Frank,' said Mr. Raby, 'I hope you have enjoyed yourself at Ascot.'

'Very much indeed,' was the reply. 'Sir John did the thing capitally.'

'Sir John did the thing!' repeated the uncle. 'What do you mean by that? I thought your object was to see the entire proceedings of an Ascot race meeting, which, I have reason to believe, is the pleasantest and most aristocratic in the world. But you seem to bestow all the credit on Inkleton, who certainly is a very——'

'I only meant to say,' interrupted Frank, 'that Sir John did the thing in the most coachmanlike style, and his turnout was uncommonly admired on the road. The fine coachmanship, also, which he exhibited, in twisting his horses right and left, and threading the carriages as he did, at the rate of eight or ten miles in the hour, and never touching one of them! And then the coachmanlike manner in which everything was done; the changing of the horses, and the scientific way in which they were put to the coach.'

'*Scientific!*' smiled the uncle; 'ridiculous, to be sure; but

really, Frank, it is somewhat of a melancholy reflection, that, after all the money expended on Inkleton's education, and with really good parts, which he has, he should now pride himself upon nothing so much as being a first-rate coachman. Surely he did not imbibe such ambition from reading the classics.'

'Perhaps not, sir,' said our hero, a little petulantly, standing up for his patron and friend. 'But please to recollect, uncle, that one of the best of them advises us, with his own usual good taste, not to condemn the taste of others any more than to extol that of ourselves. "*Nec tua laudabis studia, nec aliena reprendes*"; and, moreover, if the Athenians, the most polished nation of all antiquity, deemed it an honour to be considered skilful charioteers, why should Englishmen consider it a disgrace? Again;—have not their poets divided the honour of the charioteer with the hero who fights in the chariot? Does not Homer make his Nestor the wisest man, *and the best coachman* of his day? Does he not make Priam put his own horses, *with his own hands*, to the car in which himself and the herald demand the body of Hector? Is he not, indeed, blamed by one of his commentators for dwelling upon the description of Juno's chariot, when his reader expects him to lead him into the thick of the battle?

"For why should Homer deck the gorgeous car,
When our raised souls are anxious for the war?
Or dwell on every wheel, when loud alarms,
And Mars, in thunder, call the host to arms?"

And is he not so minutely faithful to this part of his subject, that, at the games of Patroclus, he represents Menelaus borrowing one of the horses of Agamemnon—a horse called Æthe (here the uncle smiled, as much as to say: I wish your recollection was as good on all points, as upon this)—to put to his chariot with his own, on account of his superior action, no doubt. Has not the greatest poet that ever dipped pen in ink immortalised the coachman in song—ay, even in letters of pure gold? Turning, then, to the Romans; can anything be finer than Juvenal's description, in his eleventh satire, of the excitement created in Rome by the various chariot races at the Circensian games, which passage has been so admirably translated by Congreve:—

"This day, all Rome (if I may be allowed,
Without offence to such a numerous crowd,

To say 'all Rome') will in the circus sweat :
Echoes already to their shouts repeat ;
Methinks I hear the cry—*Away ! away !*
The green has won the honour of the day.
Oh ! should the sports be for one year forborne,
Rome would, in tears, her loved diversion mourn;
And that would now a cause of sorrow yield,
Great as the loss of Cannæ's fatal field."

Did not Lateranus, the consul, drive his own chariot by night, and, when the year of his office was out, publicly in the streets of Rome, by day ?

'But really, uncle, joking apart—for I have seen you smile at my panegyric on ancient coachmen—I think you must admit that the fashion for gentlemen driving their own coaches, which is now becoming so prevalent, will, in time, do much good. It has caused them to notice and take under their protection public, or "road-coachmen," as they are called, a most useful body of men, "scientific" in their calling—you may smile at the epithet, and yet it is their due—who will be much the better for coming more in collision with their superiors, and receiving, whilst imparting, instruction. It is quite evident, and I have heard not only my father, but Dr. Chapman and Mr. Egerton say, the coachmen on our road are wonderfully improved since Sir John and the Hon. Mr. Conolly have been so much at work amongst them with their own teams. The latter, indeed, has put together and published a few general maxims, not only relating to their situation and practice, as coachmen, but to their conduct as men; and they will, no doubt, be the means of saving the lives of many persons who travel in the course of the year. Now, if he were not himself a coachman, he could not have done this—at least with any effect.'

'Certainly not, I admit,' replied Mr. Raby, 'any more than Æschylus could have celebrated the triumphs of his country on the stage so perfectly as he has done, had he not fought and bled on the plains of Marathon; for I suppose I must be *classical* here as well as yourself. But tell me, Frank, do you mean to be an amateur coachman, as well as a fox-hunter ?'

'I should like it,' answered Frank, 'if my means allowed me, but not else; for we should pay too dear for any pleasure, I should think, if it brings us into pecuniary difficulties.'

'Good, my dear Frank,' resumed the uncle; 'these are honeyed words of yours to my ears.'

'Why, you know, uncle, coaching can be enjoyed for six months in the year, in which there is no hunting; and I should like never to be quite idle, if I could help it. I think lounging away one's time, at a watering-place, in the summer, must be poor fun for a young man; besides, the having a team of one's own affords opportunities of dispensing much pleasure amongst our friends and acquaintances.'

'And what think you of racing, now you have seen it in perfection?' asked the uncle, with some expression of anxiety on his countenance.

'I like racing much,' replied Frank; 'as Mr. Egerton says, "it is a stimulus, acting on the generous ambition of men and horses, and, as regards the latter, most serviceable to the country; but only a fit pursuit for persons of large means"; consequently it will be out of my power to indulge myself in it. As an object of gain, I think very lightly of it; I have been told there is no instance on record of a *gentleman* getting money by it, on the long-run; and we have one instance to the contrary, at this time, at Christchurch; at least, there is a very good fellow, by the name of Fairfax, who says he shall be £100,000 a worse man for his father having been all his life on the turf.'

Mr. Raby looked serious at the conclusion of these remarks; but there was something in the expression of his features which implied dissatisfaction, if not disgust, at the idea of a young man, who had gone through Eton school, laying his account in driving four horses on a turnpike road—in which the most ignorant fellow in the country might excel him—as a means of employment in after life; or, to use his nephew's words, to prevent his lounging away his time in idleness, at some watering-place, in the summer. He remained silent, however, perhaps from the recollection of the little use he himself had made of a first-rate education, and of first-rate talents as well.

The arrival of the postman with some letters put an end to the conversation. One of them was from Mr. Raby to his brother, who read the following extract from it to his nephew: —'Frank has informed me of the pleasant manner in which he has passed his time in London, Ascot, etc.; and likewise of the high treat you afforded him, by asking those Leicestershire sportsmen to meet him at dinner. As for Ascot, the less

practical information he brings with him from thence, the better, for it is not my wish that he should attain a relish for the turf; but, as he is bent on being a fox-hunter, I am glad you have exhibited to him, in the person of your Melton friends, some of the best specimens of that class of men. I knew Mountford's father well, and there was no better man; and I hear an excellent account of Lord Edmonston, from an old friend of his mother, who visited me lately. Of Raymond I know nothing but from what I see of him in the newspapers, as the owner of a good stud of race-horses, and a successful gentleman jockey at Bibury and other places. His being an acquaintance of yours, however, is a guarantee for everything that is correct; for there must be something in a man beyond being a mere sportsman, to give him access to your table. These are the sort of men, then, that I wish Frank to be acquainted with; and as I hear very good accounts of him, it is not improbable that he may, one of these days, know a little more of them, by accepting Somerby's invitation to spend a month at Melton Mowbray, and see "the cream of the thing" with foxhounds, under the direction of the famous Meynell, which, I flatter myself, he has seen with harehounds, under the management of your humble servant. You must be aware that the expenses of a trip of this sort would be considerable, and, under general circumstances, somewhat unjustifiable, as regards a younger brother; but you must also be aware that, beyond the expenses of his education, and the purchase of a few books, Andrew costs me nothing. His pony is all that he requires; and his sister tells me he must be saving money out of his annual allowance. Now, as our grandfather and father were both sportsmen, and I have myself some pretensions to the appellation, I should wish Frank to become one, and be somewhat conspicuous as such, for which I think he is qualified. As for his passion for driving coaches, that will most likely wear away; he imbibed it from Inkleton, who is an excellent person withal, and certainly has done much good in his neighbourhood, in liberalising—at all events, humanising—a set of men, I mean coachmen and guards, by coming so much into collision with them on their own ground. It seems the 'passion for the ribbons,' as it is called, is very much gaining ground; that it is encouraged by the Prince; that his friend Sir John Lade has, at this

time, seventeen chestnut coach-horses, with whole legs, in his stable! and that a regular driving club is in agitation, patronised by John Warde, Prouse, Oakover, Bamfylde, and some others, who are great patrons of the road. Prouse, I hear, has already composed a song for the occasion, in which every individual coachman, guard, and horsekeeper, between London and Exeter, is introduced by name and character. I fancy I see you smile; neither can I avoid doing so myself, at the recollection of such absurdity; but there is no harm in it, after all; *au contraire,* they say, good will be the result. If so, *floreat Auriga.*'

'Well, Frank,' observed the uncle, 'I know not whether I am not myself of the same opinion with your father. We have to thank an amateur of "the ribbons," as you call amateur coachmen, for the present improved mode of conveying our mails. I allude to Mr. Palmer, who suggested that they should be carried by coaches, drawn by four horses, contracted for by Government, and guarded, instead of in the old mode by a boy on horseback; and his plan was carried into effect in 1784. He assured ministers that Government would be put to a very little additional expense, inasmuch as the coach proprietors would have a strong inducement to contract for conveying the mails at a cheap rate, on account of the additional recommendation to passengers their coaches would thereby acquire, in point of security, regularity, and despatch. Strange to say, however, although Government approved of this plan, and the public in general were satisfied of its utility, yet, like all new schemes, however beneficial they may promise to be, it met with a strong opposition in some quarters. It was represented by a number of the oldest and ablest officers and clerks in the post-office, not only as impracticable, but dangerous. Notwithstanding this opposition, powerful as we may suppose it to have been, it was at length established, and gradually extended to different parts of the kingdom, chiefly by the exertions of country gentlemen, who took an interest in the coaches which were running on the various roads in their neighbourhood. It soon appeared that not only was the revenue improved by the introduction of this system, but that a prodigious saving of time was the effect of it. For example: previously to the extension of it to Scotland, the mails were eighty-two hours on the road from London to

Edinburgh, and eighty-five from Edinburgh to London; and, subsequently, the time has been shortened to sixty-two in each case.'

'I am happy to hear this account from you,' observed the nephew, 'and I will retail it to Sir John when I see him; but will you have the kindness to inform me when the conveyance of letters by post, as the term is, commenced in the world? I have often heard the subject discussed, but never satisfactorily so.'

'You have imposed a task upon me,' answered the uncle, 'that I scarcely know how to perform; but I imagine the case to have been something like this:—

'In the early periods of society, communication between the different parts of a country must always be rare and difficult; individuals, at a distance, had little occasion for mutual intercourse; and, when such communication was found necessary, special messengers were employed. As order and civilisation advanced, occasions for correspondence multiplied. The sovereign, for instance, found it requisite to transmit orders and laws to every part of his kingdom; and for this purpose he made use of messengers, or "couriers," as they are now called, to whom he committed the charge of forwarding his despatches. But, without stations in the way, where could these messengers find refreshment for either themselves or their horses? Experience soon pointed out the necessity of ensuring such accommodation, by erecting, upon all the great roads, houses, or stations, where the messengers might stop, as occasion required, and where, for their still greater convenience, relays of horses were kept in readiness, to enable them to pursue their journey with uninterrupted despatch. Thus, these houses were called *posts*, and the messenger who made use of them was dignified by the appellation of a *post*. Though, at first, the institution was, no doubt, intended solely for the use of the sovereign and the necessities of the state, yet, by degrees, individuals, seeing the benefit resulting from it, availed themselves of the opportunity to carry on their own correspondence, and for which they willingly paid a certain rate to the sovereign. Thus a post-office, of some kind or other, gradually came to be established in every civilised country, although we find Cicero lamenting the absence of one in Italy, in his time. Still they can be traced, I believe,

as far back as the ancient Persians. Xenophon, indeed, tells us they were invented by Cyrus, on his Scythian expedition, about 500 years before Christ; that the station-houses were sumptuously built, with accommodations for many men and horses; and that every courier, on his arrival, was obliged to communicate his despatches to the postmaster, by whom they were immediately forwarded again. Herodotus mentions the singular fact that, from the shore of the Ægean Sea to Susa the capital, there were 111 stages for posts, each a day's journey distant from the preceding.

'It does not, I believe, clearly appear,' continued Mr. Raby, 'in what manner, or when, posts were established among the ancient Greeks; and, although they are known to have existed among the ancient Romans, it is difficult to trace the period of their introduction among either. Suetonius, however, assures us that Augustus instituted posts along all the great roads of the empire; and it is also asserted that they were known in the days of the republic, when posts, and post-stations, called *statores* and *stationes*, were established by the senate. The epistolary correspondence of antiquity, however, was probably at no period so extensive as to require or maintain post-offices on the footing of modern posts for the mere conveyance of letters. It is in later times only, when the extension of commerce gave occasion to frequent communication, that those establishments are to be found complete. The institution of them in modern history appears to be in the year 807, by the Emperor Charlemagne, but we hear little of their being regularly established in England until the time of James the First. In the time of Charles the First, rates of postage were fixed; and it is rather a curious fact, that the allowance to postmasters on the road, for horses employed in these posts, was fixed at twopence-halfpenny per mile; which is, I believe, the exact sum now paid to the proprietors of our mail coaches for conveying the letter-bags. These posts, however, extended then only to a few of the principal roads.'

'And can you tell me when travelling by the use of post-horses commenced,' asked Frank, 'for I lately heard a dissertation on that subject, which came to no satisfactory conclusion?'

'At what period the public of any country commenced travelling post, as the term is, is difficult now to decide.

Post-horses are mentioned in the Theodosian code (*de cursu publico*), but I doubt whether any use could be made of them, except by persons travelling in the service of the state. At all events, I remember Pliny found himself compelled to ask permission of his government to avail himself of their services to carry his sick wife. In the year 1548, horses for *riding post* were let out in England at a penny per mile; but when posting by carriages commenced, it is not in my power to determine. I think somewhere about the same time, although to a very limited extent. It is, indeed, only within these last twenty years that English gentlemen have desisted from the practice of what is termed riding post from their country seats to London, good hackneys being provided for themselves and servants on the roads.'

'And not a bad way of travelling,' observed Frank; 'next to a seat on a coach-box, behind good horses, I should prefer it to any other.'

'Very good,' resumed the uncle, 'for gentlemen of a certain age, and of certain personal dimensions; but it would hardly have suited me. It was all very well, however, for *gentlemen* to travel in this way, because they could go just as far in the course of the day as they felt inclined to do; and no doubt but, by the change in the action of the muscles, the result of changing the horses, they could travel a long way without feeling fatigued, if in the previous habit of fast riding. But there is one practice amongst our noblemen and country gentlemen which they carry to the verge of cruelty. I allude to their making their servants ride post-horses, after their carriages, when they travel post, and often to the extent of from 200 to 300 miles, with very little intermission. This is a system that ought to be done away with, and no doubt will soon be remedied, as it is calling too severely on the personal exertions of servants.'[1]

'Allow me to ask you,' said Frank, 'now that we are on the subject of the *road*, what distance of ground ought to be implied by the word *mile*, for I have heard many disputes on the subject?'

'A dispute on this subject,' replied Mr. Raby, 'is imme-

[1] It is scarcely necessary to observe, the placing rumbles, or dickeys, on the hinder part of gentlemen's carriages has caused the abandonment of this system of servants riding post.

diately settled by a reference to different countries. An English statute mile is eighty chains, or 1760 yards, that is, 5280 feet; but reckoning in geometrical paces (60,000 of which make a degree of the equator), it stands thus in relation to that of other European countries; England, 1200 paces; Scotland and Ireland, 1500; Italy, 1000; Russia, 750; Germany, 4000; Hungary, 6000. Thus, a friend of mine, travelling in Germany, arrived in a town, at the edge of night, by a diligence, on his road to visit a friend; and on being informed that his house was only a "mile distant," he set off to walk. Guess his surprise, then, on finding that he had to walk nearly four miles of the measure of his own country. There were no less than four distinct French leagues, varying from 1500 to 3000 paces; neither of them, I believe, adopted now. Nevertheless, ask twenty Frenchmen what is the extent of a modern French league? and nineteen of the twenty will be unable to tell you. It is generally supposed to be 3000 geometrical paces, or three English miles, but I believe the case to be this:—twenty-five French leagues make seventy miles, which renders the length of ground five miles less, in that given number of leagues, than if the leagues were exactly three English miles. Then, again, among the ancient Romans there was the like confusion respecting this measure of distance, commonly called a mile. It was generally expressed by the words *mille passus*, a thousand feet; but the extent of it is by no means defined. One author makes it to consist of seven stadia; Plutarch, little short of eight; Strabo and Polybius, just eight. The reason of this discordance seems to be, the difference between the Grecian and the Roman foot, the first-named being the greatest. The Romans, however, had a stone ("lapis")—which we call the "mile-stone," at the end of each mile, the number marked on it denoting the distance from Rome. Augustus, indeed, erected a gilt pillar in the forum of that city, at which all the public roads, or "ways," of Italy, distinguished by stones, were terminated; and the same was afterwards done in the provinces. Hence the traveller would find *tertius lapis* on one denoting three; *centesimus lapis*, a hundred miles, etc.'

CHAPTER VIII

Rural life in hall and field: a ball and a wound (consequences alike common in love and war)

The period of our hero's brief visit to the metropolis of all that is gay and voluptuous having expired, he set out again for Amstead Abbey, where his arrival was hailed with joy by all parties, and by none more than Jem Perren and the huntsman. But Frank Raby came under the denomination of 'one whom everybody likes,' a characteristic which, indeed, he preserved to the last day of his life.

Shortly after his return to the Abbey, a grand entertainment was given by a neighbouring Baronet—intended to have been given under the canopy of heaven, in his beautiful grounds; but a shower of rain making its appearance—which caused his lady to declare she had a great mind to go and live in that country where no rain falls—the company adjourned to the mansion-house, which had ample means of accommodating them. A ball, at night, was the result, and as it was the first at which our hero had appeared since he had assumed the manly gown, he was an object of some interest in the assembly.

'What a fine young man Frank Raby is become!' was the remark overheard in one quarter.

'He has a very manly appearance, in addition to his good looks,' was whispered in another.

'How like a gentleman he looks!' in a third.

'There appears to be no affectation about him,' in a fourth.

'God never made a coxcomb worth a groat,' muttered a gouty old gentleman, who overheard the last encomium; 'there never was a bad Raby yet, and I think Frank will keep up the charter, as well as his brother Andrew.'

'Oh!' remarked a fair lady, who had two daughters in the room, '*I* think Andrew is superior of the two. It is true,

his health is delicate, and requires care, but he is a most amiable young man, and of a more intellectual turn of mind than his younger brother. For my own part, I do not know whether or not I exactly like Frank Raby; I think his father has acted wrong in letting him be so much with Sir John Inkleton, who, we know, although a good-hearted young man, has some strange propensities, and is also very extravagant. I am told he spends a thousand a year amongst coachmen and guards, and I hear that he has made Frank Raby as fond of coach-driving and fox-hunting as he himself is. If Frank were the elder, instead of the younger, brother, all this would not be so material; but as his chief dependence, to pursue such expensive pleasures, is on his uncle, I wish he may not place it on a broken staff. I know Mr. Beaumont Raby well, and surely a person of his high literary attainments, and great personal accomplishments, and living in such good London society, must think very lightly of all such pursuits. I have, indeed, heard him say as much as that he wished both his nephews to distinguish themselves at Oxford, if not to carry honours (which you know was his own case), and then to assume high stations in the senate (which you know was, unfortunately, *not* his case, not from want of ability, but from a natural and insuperable indolence) when they make their appearance in the world. As to my valued friend, Lady Charlotte, I am quite sure she is much pained at the accounts she hears of Frank's hunting and riding; and Andrew told my daughter Jane, the other day, that he has already been in scrapes, connected with them, at Oxford.'

'All very fine theory of yours, my dear madam,' said the gouty old gentleman, 'but doings and sayings are wide apart. No one knows Beaumont Raby much better than I do, and no one esteems some parts of his character more. All know his literary, as well as his personal, accomplishments to be of the first order; at the same time, where can we find, in proportion to his means, a much more useless member of society? It is true, he sends his money to Italy, to enrich a country which owns him not as her son, and thereby may be said to encourage the fine arts; but, with the exception of the benefit arising from the necessary disbursement of his fine income, what good does he do for his own? With talents which might have made him one of the resources of his country, he sits by,

and looks on at the difficulties that oppose it, all his energies being relaxed and absorbed in what may be called the effeminacy of refinement. But why all this? Merely because he was averse, from his youth, to those manly pursuits which you condemn, and which he now finds out, though too late, would have saved him—as they have his brother—from those almost insupportable bodily inconveniences he at this time endures. Then look at my own case. My wife entreated me to leave off hunting with my friend Raby's harriers, on two accounts: first, she feared I should break my neck, emphatically reminding me that the key of the cupboard was in my pocket; and, secondly, that, as a clergyman, it was improper in me to hunt or shoot. It was in vain that I referred her to the book of Genesis, to show that hunting was ordained by the Almighty himself, and also pursued by the best of men. Then I must not shoot, for my neighbour, Lord Longden, did not like it, and it would prevent his giving me the living of Branton, which, you well know, he gave to a distant relation only last year, although I hung up my gun, and gave away my dogs seven years back. My case, therefore, is that—more from the fear of displeasing a great man, than offending my God—for I cannot look upon Him as so severe a judge—I have done myself all this disservice. I am punished in this world, from a vain apprehension of being punished in the next; I am become a cripple, by disease produced by an inactive life, and am, half my time, useless to my parishioners from that cause alone. It is now too late to remedy all this; but rather would I incline to the sentiment of Confucius, that he who finds out a new pleasure, provided it be harmless, is one of the most useful members of society, in a highly civilised country like our own.'

The ball commenced;—

> 'Music arose, with its voluptuous swell;
> Soft eyes look'd love to eyes which spoke again';

and our hero was not long in selecting the partner of his choice. Like Merion, in the *Iliad*, also, he distinguished himself by his dancing, a qualification hardly to have been looked for in one who might have been disposed to have held that accomplishment cheap. But such was not the case. It was enough for him that it was an accomplishment, and one necessary for a

gentleman; and although it could not have been said of him, what Shakespeare says of the dancing-master, that 'his grace was only in his heels,' he had taken some pains to improve himself in the elegant and fascinating art. But who was the object of his choice at this gay ball, where were assembled all the youth and beauty of the neighbourhood, that the higher class of society could boast of? Was it a young lady in her teens, about his own age, and one who, like himself, had just made her *début* in the world? It was not. He had selected a young and beautiful married woman for his partner, and who, although of character pure and spotless, seemed somewhat pleased by the choice. The dance concluded, he led her to her seat, and again made his election. But there was something in his manner, at this moment, that might not have been regarded by a common observer, but which attracted the eye of Lady Charlotte, and also of his *ci-devant* tutor, who happened to be seated by her side. There did not appear to be that gaiety in his demeanour, that earnest admiration of his partner, young and elegant as she was, that he had exhibited whilst standing opposite to Mrs. Denham—for that was the young matron's name; neither was he seen approaching her, as in the other case, for the purpose of exchanging words, or we might perhaps say, thoughts. All this, however, would have been passed over, but for some after-occurrences which had less chance of escaping the notice of his lynx-eyed observers—for such are all mothers, if not all tutors, over young persons of both sexes at a ball.

In the dance previous to entering the supper-room, our hero was again seen leading out Mrs. Denham, and afterwards appeared seated by her at the supper-table. Neither did his attentions stop here. When her carriage was ordered, it was he who handed her into it, and that of his own family being the next in the rank of those about to depart, he entered it with these words on his lips:—

'Well, Lady Charlotte (to his mother), I dare say you will be glad to get home, for you have had a fatiguing day of it. But, Emma (to his sister), was it not a delightful ball? Is not that Mrs. Denham a beautiful creature? I am so glad Sir John introduced me to her.'

'She is,' replied Lady Charlotte, 'and'—laying some emphasis on the first epithet—'as *good* as she is beautiful.'

'What a *spoon* you must be,' continued Frank, to his elder brother, 'to dance with those two ugly sisters, and that Miss Johnson, who is old enough to have been your mother, when there were so many pretty women in the room. For my own part, I think dancing, unless with a pretty woman for a partner, one of the greatest of all bores. In fact, pretty women and good suppers are, with me, the only inducement to go to balls.'

'Some of your Christchurch notions,' said Lady Charlotte, 'or else those of your friend Sir John. But I know no one fonder of a ball than he is, and you always see him dancing away as if——'

'Yes,' resumed our hero; 'but always with a pretty woman. I have heard him say, he dislikes an ugly woman in a ball-room as much as he would an ugly leader in his coach. He swears he never yet saw one who had any action that was not good looking, either in one place or in the other.'

'Ah,' resumed Lady Charlotte; 'Sir John's tongue runs fast, as, Dr. Johnson says, the race-horse does when he carries a light weight; but are you quite sure, Francis, he would not marry that little ugly heiress, whose fine estate joins his own?'

'No,' answered Frank, 'not if he was sure that, without her and her estate, he could never sit behind the bars, or his own coach, again.'

'There you go again, Frank,' observed Lady Charlotte laughingly, 'to the stable, as usual, for your allusions.'

'And did not you go thither, also, my dear mother, for your simile—at all events, to the race-horse?' rejoined her son.

'I believe I did,' replied his mother; 'but I do not wonder at my having done so; for when you are at home, and especially when Sir John is at the Abbey, I hear of nothing else but horses, hounds, and coach-boxes, leaders, wheelers, and so forth. Still I like Sir John, with all his foibles, but shall tell him, the next time I see him, not to be introducing you to pretty married women.'

Frank said nothing in answer to this remark, turning off the conversation to his sister, whom he asked, in a jocular mood, whether either of her partners had made a tender impression upon her heart, insinuating, at the same time, that that of their brother Andrew must necessarily have escaped unscathed in the assault, from the very ineffective strength of the batteries.

It has been often asserted that, amongst the infirmities of

human nature, men take some pleasure in creating a feeling of jealousy towards a rival, in their wives, merely because it occasions the frequent mention of the name of the lady who may, to a certain extent, have supplanted them in their affections. One thing, however, is quite beyond doubt: namely, that men—young men especially—are perpetually given to introduce subjects that may lead to the mention of, or allusion to, the object of their attachment and love. And such was the case with Frank Raby. It would be useless to disguise the fact, that the personal charms of Mrs. Denham had made an impression on our hero; and the words 'Mrs. Denham said this,' and 'Mrs. Denham thought that,' were almost perpetually on his tongue, at least, as often as opportunity occurred to him. And what excuse can be made for his indulging himself in the anticipation of feasting on forbidden fruit? None, save the almost irresistible power of a beautiful woman on a heart so young as his; and the following is the description he gave of Mrs. Denham, to one of his Christchurch friends, on his return to Oxford, after the vacation:—

'She is,' said he, 'just what, to my eye, a beautiful woman should be. Her person is of an advantageous stature, very well proportioned, and not too tall. Her hair is black as jet, with more of nature than art in the arrangement of it; her eyes, neither quite black nor yet grey, contain more sweetness than fire. Her complexion inclines to the pale, though it does not want freshness. There is, in fact, a mixture of the lily with the rose, and a clearness and delicacy of skin which is essential to beauty in a woman. Her words and actions are full of grace, and there appears a sweetness of temper in her manner and demeanour, that must engage the affections of every one. Then there is a feature in her person which I greatly admire, and that is, the form of her hand and arm. By heavens, they might be copied for the portrait of the white-armed Juno; and her bust altogether would have done for a Phidias or a Praxiteles. And in her, even is an imperfection created a beauty. She has a slight hesitation in uttering her words, which, if she were my wife, I would not have removed on any account. And yet I can hardly describe to you the effect it has, but it is somewhat like this:—it gives a simplicity of expression, delightful in any one, but irresistibly so in a pretty woman; a sort of confiding manner about it, which, although it cannot be de-

scribed, you could not but be sensible of; and to the expression of sentiments of endearment, what force must it give!'

'And what kind of a man is the husband of this fine woman?' asked Goodall, for it was to him that Frank Raby was unbosoming himself. 'I hope he is deserving of the treasure.'

'Not he, indeed,' replied our hero; 'he appears scarcely conscious of possessing such a jewel. If I had such a wife, I think I should never be able to keep my eyes off her person; whereas, although she was the finest and best-dressed woman at the ball at which I met her, I never once saw him even look upon her—certainly not in admiration. Then I am told he is equally indifferent at all times. She likes riding, and is a beautiful horse-woman, but a groom is her general attendant. She likes female society, but her husband does not, and few of her sex are asked to visit her. She is musical, but I am told he never quits the dining-room in time to hear a note of it.'

'*He is in danger*, I think,' observed Goodall, with a significant wink of the eye; 'and especially if you——'

'Nonsense,' observed Frank; 'a more virtuous woman never lived. I confess I was much stricken with her that night at the ball, and danced twice with her. Perhaps I may never see her again; and perhaps it will be well for me that I never do. In fact, when I handed her into her carriage, I seemed to wish to bid her a final adieu; and as it drove from the door, with her cold-hearted husband by her side, I muttered to myself these lines:—

> "Since thou would'st needs, bewitched by some ill charms,
> Be buried in these monumental arms;
> All I can say is, may the earth lie light
> Upon thy tender limbs: and so good-night."'

But to return to the party at the Abbey.

'I am somewhat uneasy,' said Lady Charlotte to Mr. Egerton, after a few days had expired since the night of the gay ball, 'about your friend Francis. I really think the silly boy fancies himself in love with that beautiful, and, I believe, very excellent person, Mrs. Denham. Emma tells me he is always talking about her, and he says he would have his right arm cut off, on condition that he could make her his wife. It is truly ridiculous: but he seems to verify the proverb of "love

at first sight"—for, although he never saw Mrs. Denham before, he was evidently smitten, as the term is, by her charms. Fortunately Mr. Raby knows nothing of the matter, and God forbid he should; but as you are somewhat aware of it, as well as myself, I wish you would take an opportunity of giving him a lecture on the subject. He is too well-disposed, I am sure, to harbour dishonourable intentions towards any one; but the fact of his having the name of the lady so perpetually in his mouth is extremely unjust towards her, and the very thought of it makes me wretched. Oh,' continued Lady Charlotte, somewhat angrily, 'I will give Sir John a trimming if he introduces either of my sons again to a married woman, merely because she is pretty. There has been enough of mischief in my family, on that score, already, without Francis adding to the stock.'

'I am glad, my dear Lady Charlotte,' said Mr. Egerton, 'that you have mentioned this subject to me, which, I doubt not, is a painful one to you, as, indeed, it is to myself. I have a strong regard for Francis, and should extremely lament that one of the first acts of his manhood should cast a slur over his character, which it might never be in his power to remove. That he has acted imprudently, at all events *thoughtlessly*, in this affair, there is his own evidence to show. In one of those freaks in which human nature sometimes indulges, he has inconsiderately yielded to the impression made upon him by a few hours' intercourse with, certainly, a very lovely woman, but one whose situation in life forbids her ever becoming his wife, unless under circumstances which no rational man would anticipate, much less speculate upon—the age of her husband being not more than half a dozen years beyond his own.'

'Then you really think the silly boy fancies himself all at once enamoured with another man's wife?' interrupted Lady Charlotte, with marked anxiety in her countenance.

'Why,' replied Mr. Egerton, 'if it were justifiable to make a joke of a subject so serious as this, it might create a smile were I to tell you in what way my suspicions have been confirmed. Whilst Francis was under my tuition, his constant objection to verse-making was, that he had no poetry in his soul; in fact, that Nature had forbidden his being a poet, and, consequently, his attempt at making verses was a futile one. But mark the change! No sooner does the "silly boy," as your

ladyship so properly styles him, fancy himself in love, than he likewise fancies himself a poet.'

'Surely,' exclaimed Lady Charlotte, 'he has not been writing verses to Mrs. Denham?'

'I hope not,' replied Mr. Egerton; 'but that he has been exercising his newly-acquired talent *on* Mrs. Denham, I fear there is no reason to doubt; and I speak from somewhat like ocular demonstration of the fact. Happening to enter his room yesterday afternoon, in search of a book I had lent him, I saw some scraps of paper on his table, on which, in spite of erasures and alterations, I could decipher the following lines (the fair copies, I presume, he may have put into his pocket, intending, as may be also presumed, to throw the rough ones into the fire). The first ran thus:—

"Sweet's the light of morning breaking
O'er the dew-bespangled mead;
Sweet the night-breeze, hardly shaking
In its course the pliant reed.
Sweeter far the smile enlightening
Beauty's soft and sparkling cheek;
And the sigh love's ardour heightening,
With its breast so soft and meek."

'Then scrap the second contained these:—

"Thou hast an eye of tender blue,
And thou hast locks of sable hue,
And cheeks that shame the morning's break,
And lips that might, for redness, make
Roses seem pale beside them:
But whether soft or sweet are they,
Lady, alas! I cannot say,
For *I* have never tried them.

"Yet thus created for delight,
Lady! thou art not——"

'He proceeds no further; vulgarly speaking, there is a hole in the ballad. But, turning over the paper, I found that his muse had been again at work, and had again failed. Even love, I fear, will not make Francis a poet. He had scribbled thus:—

"The music ceased, the last gay dance was o'er,
And one by one the brilliant beauties fled;
The garlands vanished from the frescoed floor,
The nodding fiddler hung his weary head;

'And I, a melancholy single man,
Retired to mourn my solitary fate;
I slept awhile, but o'er my slumbering ran
The sylph-like image of my darling mate.

"I dreamt of mutual love, and Hymen's joys,
Of happy moments and connubial blisses;
And then I thought of little girls and boys,
The mother's glances, and the infant's kisses.

"But when I woke, how changed appear'd the scene;
I found——"

'Here he stopped, with the words—"Query, look out *mate* in Johnson; fear it won't do for partner at a ball. Implies partner for life, and that can't be. The devil take——"'

'Well, really, Mr. Egerton,' said Lady Charlotte, 'this farrago of nonsense is almost laughable. However, although, no doubt, another term at Christchurch will cure him of his "love at first sight," still, I wish you would talk seriously to him on the subject, and warn him of the consequences of indulging a guilty passion.'

'That I will certainly do,' replied Mr. Egerton, 'at the first convenient opportunity; and also tell him not to indulge in the sudden inspiration of his muse, unless he can turn it to a better account. I think, however, I know your son well enough to persuade myself that the present outbreak is but the mere ebullition of youthful blood, and that a little cool reflection will restore him to his senses. First, his heart ran away with his tongue; and then, his tongue ran away with his heart.'

Not many hours elapsed before the wished-for opportunity arrived, during a stroll through the shrubberies, for Mr. Egerton to fulfil the promise he had made to Lady Charlotte; which he did with both grace and feeling: pointing out to Frank the folly, to say the least of it, of this newly-born fancy, and requiring from him a pledge that he would think no more of Mrs. Denham, further than as a common acquaintance of the day; nor continue to mention her name so lightly as he had lately done. This pledge Frank willingly gave, and a circumstance shortly afterwards occurred to put the seal upon the same. Mr. Denham's father died, in consequence of which he removed his family to a distant part of England, and our hero and the beautiful Mrs. Denham never met again.

There is little more to record of the proceedings of the long

Frank Raby "flapper-shooting"
on the great lake in the Park.

Frank Rady "flapper-shooting"
on the great lake in the Park.

vacation, fishing and shooting being the principal amusements of that period—at all events, with young men who, like Frank Raby, come under the denomination of sportsmen. Relating to the last-named diversion, one fact is worth mentioning:—What is called flapper-shooting was amongst the sports entered into with spirit by our hero, and, what is very rarely the case, it was not, in this instance, merely confined to young wild ducks. The great lake in the park, at Amstead, was also frequented by teals, which bred in one of its islands in the summer, a fact very much doubted by naturalists, and certainly of rare occurrence in the southern parts of England. With a brace of well-broken retrievers, flapper-shooting, whether at ducks or teal, is very good sport, and rendered valuable by its being seasonable previously to the commencement of game-shooting, to which it of course gives place.

At partridge-shooting, Frank Raby was now become an adept. In fact, there was but little difference, in the contribution to the bag, between himself and the elder Perren; and as for Jem, he bowed to the superiority of his young master, who, he was heard to say, 'he believed would turn out a capital sportsman, in spite of all that had been done to spoil him, by sending him to Eton and Oxford.' And our hero, with a gun in his hand, was a sportsman in the strict sense of that word, and not merely what, in these times, is more reckoned upon, namely, 'a *dead shot*.' 'The latter,' as Mr. Cobbett eloquently expressed himself, in allusion to the admirers of the modern *battue* system, 'never participates in that great delight which all sensible men enjoy at beholding the beautiful action, the docility, the zeal, the wonderful sagacity of the pointer and the setter'; but *their* merit consists in rarely missing a pheasant which is found for them by men-beaters, and in slaughtering as many head of game in a day, as a sportsman, who takes pleasure in finding them, would be satisfied with in a week. Pheasants, however, were not, at this period, plentiful on the Amstead estate, but their rarity increased their value. There were, in those days, no 'sky-rockets of pheasants,' as in the technical language of these, when a cloud of them rises in a corner of a cover into which they have been driven, and three or four fall at a shot.

We will now exhibit our hero at the county races, it being his first appearance on a race-course since he had visited

Ascot during his sojourn with his uncle in London, the account of which we have detailed. It appeared that he had brought along with him, from that aristocratic meeting, a few aristocratic ideas, and, amongst them, the notion that it was considered very slow indeed to be a looker-on at any species of diversion without having an interest in it; and in this case, having no *bonâ fide* interest in the horses—none appearing in his name—he could only concern himself with their performances. His betting-book, then, was produced, and a few speculations entered in it, though altogether to a trifling amount. This act of our hero, however, gave birth to a ludicrous incident or two, which, as a caution to youngsters who venture on the same slippery ground, it may not be amiss to make mention of.

'Pray, Francis,' said Lady Charlotte to her son, on observing him, from the window of her coach, familiarly addressed, on the second day of the meeting, by a person of doubtful appearance —that is to say, a very ordinary-looking man, in tolerably good clothes—'who is the friend who came up to you just now, and seemed so glad to see you?'

'Oh,' replied our hero, who did not intend to let his mother into the secret, 'he only wanted to speak to me about one of the horses.'

'And that strange-looking old man, on a white horse, in a harness-bridle, who followed you a long way down the course, apparently in earnest conversation with you, and carrying a book in his hand?' continued Lady Charlotte.

Here was a poser for the young sportsman. He was above telling an untruth, but was somewhat puzzled for an off-hand answer to rather a close question.

'A bothering old Irishman, by the name of O'Hara,' replied Frank, 'who has been trying to persuade me, that *he* could pick out the winner of the next race, and wanted to know whether *I* thought *I* could do so, also.'

'But, Francis,' exclaimed his sister, 'I saw you all but quarrelling with some ill-looking man on the other side of the course; what could that have been about?'

'Why, I had better tell you the real state of the case at once,' replied Francis. 'The persons you allude to are all of them members of the most rascally community upon earth —known by the appellation of black-legs. They attend all

country races; and, having heard me offer a few bets yesterday, have been following me about the course to-day, with the hope of winning my money. But I shall be very cautious in having anything to say to them, for two reasons. In the first place, my knowledge of the horses must be very inferior to that of themselves, who are intimate with all the trainers and jockeys in the county; and in the next, many of them dispute a bet if they lose it. For example, the man Emma saw me disputing with served me thus:—having won ten pounds from him yesterday, I went up to him to-day, and said, very civilly, "I will thank you for ten pounds"; on which he replied, "I beg pardon, sir, *I have ten pounds to receive from you.*"'

'And did you pay the fellow?' said Lady Charlotte.

'I did not,' replied Frank, 'but I lost the ten pounds I won from him. Then that old Irishman is, I understand, famous for making wrangles, and disputing bets which he loses. But the greatest adept of them all, is the well-dressed rascal you first saw me speaking to. He has a method of half-shutting one eye, so as to give the appearance of being blind of it. This device serves him in two ways. When he makes a bet with a stranger, he appears blind of an eye, previous to the event being decided; if the bet is lost, he shows two good eyes, and the stranger being in pursuit of a one-eyed man to pay him his money, overlooks him in the crowd, and, of course, never gets paid. Then, again, I heard of his doing a very neat thing, the other day, by the help of this accommodating eye. He lost twenty pounds to a stranger, on a race, having his eye closed when he made the bet. On the result being against him, he thus addressed his antagonist, with his eye wide open: "I believe, sir, I owe you twenty pounds." "You mistake, sir," replied the other, "I had only one bet on the race, *and that was with a one-eyed gentleman.*"'

'Well, really, Francis,' observed Lady Charlotte, 'I think you must be a very great simpleton to have anything to do with such scoundrels; in fact, it is only with simpletons that they dare to play such tricks. As you cannot be a match for them, I hope you will, from this time forth, have nothing more to do with them.'

Our hero made no reply, and so the matter dropped.

The other incident which occurred is of a more harmless nature. In the days to which I am now alluding, it was the

custom for the public dinners, or 'ordinaries,' as they are termed, at race meetings, to be attended by the gentlemen of rank and wealth in the neighbourhood, as well as, occasionally, by a few whose situation in life, although respectable, did not allow of their being in such good company on any other occasion. Amongst the latter class was a wealthy young yeoman, fond of racing and hunting almost to insanity, but who, from his appearance and manners, would, in these days, be placed at the head of all the *snobs*. There was, also, in the room, a gentleman in whom he greatly delighted, inasmuch as he was an owner of harriers and race-horses, and, by his extreme good-nature and affability, a highly popular character with the order of which his admirer made one. It chanced that they sat opposite to each other at the dinner-table; and as the youthful blood of the yeoman waxed warm with wine, he resolved to pay his favourite Squire a compliment, and, taking courage, thus addressed the chair:—

'*Mr. President*, may I be allowed to propose a toast?'

'By all means,' replied the president.

'Then I will give you—*Down-Barton's glory*,' said the man, who delighted in hounds and horses, and doated on the Squire that was the owner of them.

'Down-Barton's glory?' repeated the steward; 'I must beg an explanation of the toast, for I do not comprehend its meaning.'

'Then, sir, you shall have it,' resumed the yeoman; '*I mean Squire Cranbrook, and there he sits*'—(pointing to his opposite neighbour).

It was now the Squire's turn to pay a compliment, his health having been drunk with great applause; and this is the way in which he did it. Sending for his servant, he ordered him to go to a druggist's shop, and get half a pint of syrup of buckthorn, which he was to put into a bottle containing an equal quantity of claret, and, when well mixed, to put it by him on the table. 'Now, Mr. President,' said Squire Cranbrook, 'allow *me* to give a toast.'

'By all means,' answered the steward; 'always happy to hear from Mr. Cranbrook.'

'Then I'll give you the health of my opposite neighbour, Mr. Ridgeways, a good sportsman, and a dear lover of horses and hounds,' replied Squire Cranbrook. 'Stand up, if you

"Mr. Ridgway's good health—now!"

please, Mr. Ridgeways (himself also rising from his seat at the moment, with a bumper of claret in one hand, and the delightful mixture in the other). 'Now, sir,' said he to his admirer, 'to convince you of the high sense I entertain of the compliment you have paid me, in proposing my health in the flattering manner in which you have done it, we will, if you please, pledge to each other in a bumper, out of the same bottle.'

'I should be delighted, sir,' hiccuped the yeoman—the Squire filling his (Mr. Ridgeways') glass at the moment. 'And now, sir,' continued the Squire, 'as a still further proof of sincerity, and my high esteem for you as a sportsman and gentleman, suppose we take off our glasses *at a chuck*, and I'll give the word.'

'Delighted beyond measure,' replied the head of all the snobs.

'Gentlemen!' exclaimed the Squire, 'here's the health of Mr. Ridgeways, a great promoter of sport.—Mr. Ridgeways' good health—*now*,' and at the word 'now,' the contents of both glasses disappeared.

The sequel of the story is soon told. The operation of the buckthorn was instantaneous; and the warm-hearted yeoman was carried out of the room in a state that need not, if it could, be described.

CHAPTER IX

Two events occur, of great influence upon the career of the hero: he takes his degree at Oxford, and loses his brother, whereby he becomes heir to the goodly domains of Amstead.

We now proceed to rather an awful period in the lives of young English gentlemen, and of such, especially, as may wish to distinguish themselves as scholars—namely, the taking a degree at college. At the period, however, to which we are now alluding, between thirty and forty years back, this was a less serious affair than it now is, inasmuch as the undergraduates and examining masters—of Oxford, in particular—were more intimately associated with college convivialities than they now are; so much so, indeed, that not only, in many cases, were the selection of the master to examine them, and the books in which they were to be examined, left to the candidate's choice, but, on the preceding evening, at what is now called, amongst the vulgar, 'a good blow out,' at the said candidate's expense, the very passages in the chosen authors were pointed out as having been carefully perused for the occasion.

The sequel to this part of the progress of my hero and his brother is soon told. Andrew took a first-class degree, and was highly complimented in the schools; and Frank obtained one quite above the average of those taken, or even tried for, by young gentlemen brought up as he had been brought up, amongst hounds, horses, gamekeepers, and coachmen, and whose mind was strongly bent towards all uses to which such animals are applied.

Having completed their Oxford 'trials,' everything was arranged for the departure of the two Rabys on their travels, when an unexpected event put a stop to it. The insidious disease which had long been making silent, though certain, inroads on the naturally weakly constitution of the elder brother, now showed itself openly; and it was the opinion of his medical attendants that a continental tour was out of the

question, whatever might be the result of the benign influence of a more temperate climate than the one in which he was then living. This step was in contemplation, but met with the same fate, in being also deemed impracticable, and was, of course, at once abandoned. In short, the rupture of a blood-vessel at the lungs, produced by a fit of coughing, brought on a rapid exhaustion of a body already enfeebled by disease and weakly from its birth; and in less than a month from the day on which that occurrence took place, this talented and amiable, although somewhat eccentric young man, was laid by the side of his ancestors in the family vault of Amstead church.

It is almost needless to remind the reader of the change that had now taken place in the situation and prospects of our hero. In the place of his being sure of succeeding to nothing at the decease of his father, beyond his share of the money settled on younger children on his marriage, which, as there were only two, amounted to £15,000, he now found himself heir apparent to the entire Amstead estate, settled by entail on male heirs; and likewise heir presumptive—at least, such had he a right to consider himself—to the very considerable wealth of his uncle. The effect of this change very soon became visible; two more hunters were talked of, as necessary to hunt with the foxhounds, the Amstead harriers and 'old Dick' being considered as *infra dig.*, if not absolute bores. Perren also was spoken to, by the 'young Squire,' in a tone somewhat different from what he had been previously accustomed to from the late 'young Squire,' or even from our hero himself. 'I *will* have lots of pheasants in the "Big Wood,"' said he to him one day; 'and likewise in "Blackthorn Rough"; they will make capital preserves.'

'That they sartinly will, Mr. Francis,' replied Perren; 'but where am I to get the pheasants to stock them with? I doubt the Squire will not stand the expense.'

'D—n the expense!' said Francis; 'I will find the pheasants. I can have as many as I like from a man in London; and if the Squire will not pay for them, I will.'

'But the lookers-out, Mr. Francis,' resumed the keeper; 'who is to pay them? Old Will Hodges and Jack Barret will have no chance against the poachers, when our covers are full of pheasants.'

'I will find lookers-out,' answered our hero, 'and some of the right sort, too. You must draft those two old cripples, who are quite unequal to their task, and have long been so.'

'Well, to be sure,' said Perren, 'they are poor creatures for that purpose, sir, but you know——'

'Yes, yes,' exclaimed Francis, 'I know what you are going to say; they are worn out in our service; but I shall not forget that circumstance; and I will take care to provide for them, although I believe they have ginned many a hare in their time, and spent the money they sold them for in the alehouse.'

'Well, to be sure,' continued Perren, 'they both loves a drop of drink, as most people who follows field sports commonly do; but I never catched them out in selling any game.'

'I dare say not,' answered Frank; 'they are both too sly for that.'

Then, again, a conversation took place, in the stable, between the young Squire and the coachman, somewhat to this effect:—

'I must make my father get rid of these infernal long-tailed blacks,' said the former; 'they are really only fit for a London black job.'

'You are quite right, sir,' observed the latter; 'I am really quite ashamed of them when we go to the races, or to dine at Sir John's, or Lord Morton's. In short, the sarvants make game of me, and tell me I want nothing but the cold-meat cart behind me; and one of them—a London sarvant, who was at the Grange on a visit—axed me if I warn't agoing to be coachman to King Pluto? But I tell you, Mr. Francis, it's no use speaking to the Squire about these here old blacks; it's my lady that will do the business. I often hear my lady praising other gentlefolk's coach-horses; and I once heard her say she "wished Mr. Raby would get a better sort in his stable." Now you know, sir, the Squire never refuses my lady anything; see what expense he goes to with those tame pheasants, and that trumpery flower-garden; I am sure, sir, one word from my lady would do it.'

'Oh, I'll do it,' said Frank: 'I am determined these stinking, greasy-heeled brutes shall be drafted, and that

infernal old coach, too; for you might as well attempt to drive four horses from a stool, as from that thing called a box.'

Then the old and faithful butler was talked to, much after this fashion, the first time our hero caught him alone in his pantry:—

'Is your stock of claret low?' demanded Frank.

'Not particularly so,' replied the butler.

'The Squire has got very shy of it, then,' resumed Frank; 'I was quite annoyed on Monday, when Sir John Inkleton and those gentlemen dined here; he never called for it until he had half poisoned them with his "old port," as he calls it, only fit for the steward's room.'

'It is very dear, you know, Mr. Francis; at least, such as is drunk in this house; Carbonnell's best. Let me see, nearly £100 the hogshead, or twelve shillings the bottle; a deal of money, sir, to be swallowed at four glasses! it's like swallowing gold, Mr. Francis.'

'Nonsense,' said Francis; 'what if it is?—there is plenty here to pay for it. And the champagne; how is it we did not have champagne on Monday?' 'Lord! sir,' replied the butler, 'you would not drink champagne in such cold weather as this; it's only fit for the dog-days, when you want something to cool you.' 'Well,' said our hero, 'these things must be altered, or few of my friends will come a second time to the Abbey.'

Next comes Mrs. Jones, the old housekeeper.

'Upon my word, Mother Jones,' said the young Squire to her, as she was giving out some essentials to the cook, 'you are getting very slack, indeed; and as for you,' addressing himself to the cook, 'it is time to put you on the shelf,—not that you must want for anything for the rest of your life, for you have been an excellent servant. But, Mother Jones, you are really past enduring. Your bills of fare are of the most scanty dimensions, and as for your second courses, you really give us nothing.'

'Lord, sir,' replied Mrs. Jones, 'what can I give you, at this time of the year, better than you always have?—either hare, woodcock, or snipes, as the keeper brings them in, for you know we have no pheasants here, at least very few.'

'We will soon have plenty,' said Frank; 'but mind this,—I have two friends coming to visit me next week, and as the

fathers of each keep excellent tables—indeed, one of them gives £200 a year to his French cook—I do hope you and the cook will exert yourselves, and not let them go home saying they were half-starved at Amstead.'

'No one was ever starved here yet,' muttered the cook, as she walked out of the room, not a little nettled at the remark; adding, when she thought she was out of hearing,—'*This comes of your Christchurch job*; but it does not signify talking, the times get worse and worse. Gentlemen isn't now what they had used to be, contented with a good wholesome dinner; a plague on those French cooks, say I; they have brought many a good gentleman to the dogs. I know one of them who——'

Here her voice was drowned by persons meeting her in the passage which led to her scene of action—the well-stored kitchen—our hero joining with Mrs. Jones in a hearty laugh at the zeal displayed by the faithful old cook for the credit of the Amstead kitchen.

Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof: here the conversation with this class of domestics ceased; but on the following morning it was somewhat alarmingly resumed amongst those of another description.

'I want to see Mr. Robson,' said our hero, and Mr. Robson (the steward) made his appearance.

'Robson,' said Frank Raby, 'I want to find out a part of the park where the ground is very dry and sound, and quite out of sight of the house; also within easy reach of water.'

'May I ask you, sir,' replied Mr. Robson, 'for what purpose you intend to apply such land? If for planting——'

'It is not for planting at all,' interrupted the young Squire (for '*being planted*,' perhaps, would have been no misnomer). 'I have some idea of getting two or three thorough-bred brood mares, in which case half a dozen paddocks will be necessary. The spot should be high and dry, and in as retired a part as can be found, that the mares may not be disturbed.'

'Have you consulted the Squire, sir, may I be so bold to ask?' observed the steward.

'Not yet,' answered Frank; 'but leave that to me. Let us walk into the park, and look for the place I want.'

As they were proceeding on their errand, through the fine

and well-timbered park, Perren, the keeper, appeared in sight. 'Give him a holloa, Robson,' said our hero; and in five minutes Perren was at his young master's side.

'Perren,' said he, 'I want to have a word or two with you, as I am about to leave home. You must get rid of all those slow, lumbering pointers of yours, and, before next August, be provided with two brace of down-charge setters, and a brace of Newfoundland retrievers, for I shall be in Scotland for the grousing season.'

'In Scotland, sir!' exclaimed the keeper.

'Yes,' answered his young master,—strangely altered, by the bye, in the old keeper's eyes since that time last year. 'Sir John, and myself, and young Lord Dauntley, have taken a shooting-ground of one of the great Scotch dukes, for which we are to pay £400.'

'But the setters, sir,' resumed the keeper; 'right good ones are very difficult to get. And then the money to get 'em with.'

'Oh! leave that to me,' continued Frank.

'But the "*down-charge*," sir. I reckon we shall make a bad job of that, sir: I never zead a down-charge dog in my life, though I have heared Sir John's keeper speaking of them.'

'Oh! leave that to me,' was once more the clincher. 'I shall send them into Cheshire, to old Potts, the watchmaker, who breaks them for ten pounds apiece.'

'Ten pounds for breaking a dog!' exclaimed the keeper, with his eyebrows half way up his forehead, and his little pig eyes opening as wide as he could stretch them. 'Did you ever hear of such a thing, Mr. Robson?—the man must be a big rogue.'

'Not at all,' resumed Frank; 'it is money well laid out. Lord Dauntley tells me he can bring four setters, broke by him, into the field, not one of which will stir, after the bird is down, till called by its name. For example—if Dash makes the point, Dash is first on his legs again, not one of the others stirring until their names are called. See what an advantage this gives you with wounded or scattered birds! He refused a hundred guineas for the two brace of dogs.'

'Well, to be sure,' observed Perren, 'his lordship has a chance to get his money back, but——'

'Oh! botheration to getting the money back, you slow old

fool,' said our hero. 'Do you look out for two brace of the best young setters you can find, and leave the rest to me.'

'But the retrievers, sir,' resumed the keeper; 'where shall I——'

'Oh! leave them to me,' was the young Squire's reply. 'Lord Dauntley has recommended me to a dog-dealer in London, who will furnish them to me, but I suppose I shall have to pay the rascal an infernal price for good ones.'

'No doubt, sir,' observed the keeper; 'and wouldn't it be well, sir, first of all, to know that they be good ones; for, if they shouldn't be good, I doubt you would have some trouble to get your money back?'

'Well, leave that to me,' said Frank; 'look you to the setters; and now go about your business; but don't come home without at least three couple of cocks, as I want to send two couple to London.'

The keeper touched his hat, and walked off; and, just as he was beginning to cogitate, was holloaed back by his young master, who thus somewhat imperiously addressed him:—

'Oh! Perren, I forgot to mention one thing to you. I don't think I shall ever be really fond of coursing. In the first place, it is too slow a sport for me; and, in the next, I think it breeds petty jealousies amongst the owners of dogs. In fact, I am now about to give a proof of the latter objection. I am *determined* that leather-headed parson, Roberts, shall no longer be the champion of our coursing meeting. He has now won the cup three years following, but he must have a check. Those brindled devils of his will not be hard to beat: therefore, you must look out for some of the best blood that can be found.'

'And where will I get it, sir?' demanded the keeper; 'I knows nobody that has——'

'Stop; never mind the greyhounds, you may leave them to me, and go on for the present with your own mongrels, who, I must acknowledge, seldom miss a hare, although they all run foul,' continued our hero: 'Lord Dauntley will be the man to apply to, as he is a member of the Swiffham meeting. Only mind this, I am determined to beat that old parson, cost what it may.'

Exit Mr. Perren, heaving a deep sigh, and muttering to himself—'I wish all this may end well.'

I have yet one more little 'sign of the times' to produce. The following day was a hunting day with Mr. Raby, and his harriers went to one of his best places for sport. One of Frank's horses went with them, but he himself did not make his appearance at the breakfast table. His father ordered him to be summoned, and his answer was this:—

'Tell my father I have ordered Achilles to be sent to cover with the hounds, but, as I have got a bit of a headache, I shall not get up just yet. Tell him not to wait for me; I will follow him.'

The hour of meeting being ten, the harriers had one good run before our hero made his appearance, which was at the comfortable, and, with harriers, now usual hour of twelve. And when he did arrive, there was a something in his manner that did not exactly please old Dick.

'Where is Inkleton?' said he to his father, scarcely throwing his eye over the pack. At all events it was not—as formerly—'Here's a fine morning, Dick, for a run! Yoicks! Bellman and Blossom, you beauties, I hope you'll show us a tickler to-day.'—No; it was once more—'Where the devil is Inkleton?—he promised to be here—but to be sure it's early yet—to arrange about our horses sleeping out to-night; and also about ourselves getting to the foxhounds to-morrow. It is one of their most distant covers, thirty miles off at least, but I would not miss it on any consideration. Confound him, I wish he would come, for my groom is waiting at the Abbey for orders to send the General forward.' Inkleton at length arrived; and the arrangements to go to cover were instantly made, after this rather comfortable fashion—namely, Frank to dine with his friend that evening; to go the first twelve miles of the thirty next morning, on his friend's coach-box, behind four of his greys; and to put four posters to the 'drag,' over the last eighteen. And we may as well give the events of the day at once; at least those in which we are concerned. They found a capital fox; and on seeing a person play a solo over a new, stiff, hog-backed, oaken stile, at the end of fifteen miles, point blank, and over a right stiff country to boot, our hero made him an offer of 200 guineas for his horse, which, after some hesitation, was accepted, Sir John having been previously consulted as to whence the 200 were to be forthcoming, a point soon determined upon, Sir John making use of an expression rather familiar to our hero—

namely, 'Leave that to me.' In fact, Sir John said, 'Let the horse be sent to my house to-morrow, and I will advance the money, and with pleasure, for I think you have bought a right good horse.'

But we must 'Hark back' to the harriers. They also found a capital hare, and a capital run was the result. Our hero not only took the lead, but frequently pressed upon the hounds; now and then, indeed, riding abreast of the leading ones, regardless of old Dick's—

'Pray don't press upon 'em, Mr. Raby'—(it was no longer 'Mr. Francis'); on the contrary, he had once the satisfaction of hearing him exclaim—

'Go along, you yelping curs; get from under my horse's feet, or I'll ride over you!'

But the scent was so good, and the hounds were so good, that they would not be driven off the line; and a capital forty minutes to Lord Morton's plantation was the result, no one being near to them except Frank Raby and old Dick, Sir John being upon a hack. But I have not done with them yet. Seeing Mr. Raby, as he called him, putting his horse straight at a six-barred white gate, into his lordship's plantation, which he knew was always locked, the following soliloquy escaped him:—

'Surely Mr. Raby ain't agoing to jump that gate! He's over it, by the Lord! Well, now I am done; I never thought I should have seen the man who could set me with these hounds; but I am too old, and so is Clodhopper, for white plantation gates. Well, I never thought I should have come to this.'

One of the park keepers being at hand, the gate was opened, and the first thing that presented itself to Dick, was our hero who had jumped some very high paling, out of the plantation, into the park, standing on his feet in the middle of the pack, the hare lying dead in their presence.

'Well, Mr. Raby,' exclaimed Dick, on approaching his young master, and within hearing—with a sort of grin on his countenance, which I believe is called 'laughing on the wrong side of the mouth'—'I think, sir, you needn't go to the fox-hounds, when you can see such a run as this with our hounds. And what a horse, to be sure, is that there Ackillis!'

'He's only half a good one,' said Frank.

'Make so bold, Mr. Raby,' observed Dick, 'what do you call a *whole* good one?'

'He wants a turn of speed, Dick, as your old Clodhopper wants a turn of blood. You see *he* could not do it at the last, or you would have been here to save me the trouble of keeping your hounds at bay.'

This speech was 'daggers to the soul' of poor Dick, and all vestige of the 'grin' disappeared. In fact, so dejected was he, in the servants' hall, throughout the evening—so unusual with him when his hounds had been showing sport—that he was more than once asked if he were not ill?

'There is nothing the matter with me,' was his reply; but on waking from a bit of a snooze on his chair, after two extra horns of ale, he was heard to sing out—

'Damn that white plantation gate!'

It might, for a moment, be a matter of surprise in what way the various discussions which have been detailed, relating to the schemes and speculations of the young Squire, reached the ears of his parents; but when it is recollected that five servants on the establishment were involved in them, the thing is easily accounted for.

To begin. 'La, Miss Raby,' said her maid, when attending her in her bedroom, the next night, 'what do you think?—we shall be so gay at Amstead; Mr. Francis is going to keep *race-horses*! Oh, how I do love a race! Then,' continued the Abigail, 'he is going to have the finest greyhounds in the world, and we are all to go to the coursing meeting, to see him win the cup. But I haven't told you all yet, miss. The coachman said last night, in the hall (as the servants' hall is called), that you was no longer to be drawn about by those old black horses, with long tails, only fit for a funeral; and that Mr. Francis was going to London to buy four blood bays, as the coachman, I think, called them.'

'I don't believe it, Sophy,' said Miss Raby.

'It's true, upon my honour, ma'am,' resumed the Abigail; 'and not only that, but you are to have a new coach as well, to be built under Mr. Francis's direction. And I suppose you have heard of his new horse?'

'Not I, indeed,' was the reply.

'La, miss; why he bought him out a hunting with the fox-hounds, the day before yesterday, for 300 guineas, and I heard

Jack Wilson ordered by his groom to go to Sir John Inkleton's to fetch him home to-morrow.'

'I never heard a word of it,' said the young lady.

'Nor of the house in Scotland neither, miss?'

'Not a word.'

'Oh! he has taken such a fine house; that is, it is between him, Sir John, and Lord Dauntley, I think they call him; and they are to give £1000 a year for it, to shoot grouse and stags upon, and some other things, whose names I can't remember.'

'You astonish me, Sophy,' said Miss Raby.

'All as true as the Bible, miss, I assure you,' resumed the Abigail; 'all the servants in the hall know it, and——'

'But, Sophy, surely Francis must be mad,' said the sister; 'whence is the money to come, to do all this?'

'Oh, miss,' replied Sophy, 'that is all right. The coachman says, he will be bound Mr. Beaumont has given him £10,000. You know, Miss Raby, he is very rich, and how fond he is of Mr. Francis.'

'I know my uncle is fond of him,' replied Miss Raby, 'and that he is rich; but he is not so fond of parting with his money, Sophy, as all that comes to. And, pray, have you heard anything else of my brother? You really alarm me, Sophy!'

'Nothing particular, ma'am,' answered Sophy; 'only they were saying last night, in the hall, that Mr. Francis was going to make strange alterations about the game; that he was very cross with old Perren, the keeper, about his dogs, because they would not *charge*; that he gave Jem Perren half a guinea for licking young Mr. Hall, of the Ashes, because he called him proud—Mr. Francis, I mean, ma'am; and I heard old Dick the huntsman say he thought Mr. Francis wasn't easy in his mind about that lady he used to talk so much about; for, the last time he was out with our hounds, he tried to break his neck over a new white-painted gate in Lord Morton's park.'

It is scarcely necessary to say that every word of this was carefully retailed the next morning to Lady Charlotte, by her daughter, before her ladyship broke her fast; and by her transferred to Mr. Raby, before he ate his dinner. Now then for the result.

It so happened that, on this evening, there was no male stranger guest at the Abbey; and after the ladies left the dinner-room, Mr. Raby and his only son were left by themselves, over a bottle of Griffiths's port.

'Well, Frank,' said Mr. Raby, 'although by Dick's account you have got too fast for my harriers, I find you met with your match yesterday with the foxhounds, for I hear the horses were all very much beat.'

'They were, indeed,' replied Frank; 'in short, only one horse had wind left in him to leap a very high stile at the finish, and I bought him.'

'You did right, Frank,' said the father; 'that is to say, if you bought him at a reasonable price.'

'Two hundred was the price,' said our hero.

'A large sum, to be sure,' observed Mr. Raby, 'but I suppose a horse that shows such superiority at the end of a long fox-chase commands a large sum. I shall order Robson to give you the money to-morrow, or perhaps a check on my banker will be preferable, as you will have to send it to the gentleman by the post.'

'The gentleman is paid for the horse, sir,' said Frank; 'Sir John lent me the money: but now we are on the subject of money, I have a few words to say to you, and a better opportunity may not, perhaps, present itself, as I am going from home to-morrow for a week or ten days. As my poor elder brother is now no longer a charge upon you, perhaps you will have the kindness to increase my allowance, for I should be very sorry to find myself involved in debts which I could not readily pay.'

'I am glad to hear you say so,' replied Mr. Raby: 'as for myself, I never had the courage to get into debt; but, Frank, have you quite abandoned the idea of going abroad? Your uncle is very anxious that you should go, and I must say I am not a little so myself.'

'I am sorry to thwart the wishes of either yourself or my uncle,' resumed our hero; 'but, upon my word, I do not see the use of my incurring such an expense. Besides, in what shall I be better for visiting foreign countries, when I cannot talk or understand the language of them? You know Doctor Johnson has put it in black and white—that he never met with a man who could *talk* a whit the better for having been abroad;

and as for *writing* the better for it, I do not suppose my scribbling propensities will ever exceed a few short epistles to my friends. At the same time, if yourself and my uncle *particularly* wish that I should travel, I am ready, though I cannot say willing, to make the required sacrifice.'

'We will drop the subject,' said the father; 'I will never ask a son of mine to do that which I perceive he is really averse to; neither is it a point so near to my heart as to that of your Uncle Beaumont, for reasons which I have heard him give. I confess, my chief desire is, that you should learn to fulfil the duties of a country gentleman and large landed proprietor—not a few, I assure you—and for which, perhaps, England may, after all, prove the best school. But, Francis, what is all this I have heard from Lady Charlotte to-day about your going to keep race-horses.'

'Why, sir,' replied our hero, somewhat taken aback; 'I am very fond, as you know, of the animal, horse, and have noticed the great pleasure my friend Dauntley takes in breeding. I was just asking Robson yesterday, as I was walking with him in the park, what he thought would be the expense of a few paddocks for the purpose; and likewise, if you did not object, what part of the park would be the fittest, at the same time not within sight from the house.'

'Paddocks in the park, my dear Frank!' exclaimed Mr. Raby; 'I cannot consent to anything of the sort. I should be sorry to see the pastoral character of this fine park defiled by a parcel of fiery-red brick walls. Then you quote your friend Dauntley as a precedent for this frolic of yours! You must bear in mind that Dauntley has twice as many thousands a year as you have hundreds, and perhaps you have no idea of the expense of a breeding stud on ever so small a scale. I am told that the annual expense of a mare, including her produce, exceeds a hundred pounds, saying nothing of the chapter of accidents, and the probability of the produce not being worth as many shillings after another hundred have been expended upon him. In fact, it is asserted, and I believe on good authority, that the present Lord Grosvenor, although a winner of the immense sum of £200,000, is still a loser by his breeding paddocks, all expenses being reckoned. Moreover, Frank, although it has been noted for lovers of all field sports—indeed your Uncle Beaumont and poor Andrew are the only exceptions

within the last 200 years—the name of Raby has never yet appeared to a race-horse; nor am I by any means anxious that it should. A fox-hunter you may be, with my hearty approbation; it is getting to the top branch of the tree, although I had not the nerve to ascend so high; it is there, I believe, that perfection is to be found. But I would not combine the pursuits which are in themselves so opposite; it would resemble the mingling of garlands of roses with the poison of deadly nightshade. But to the point, Frank; I will increase your allowance to £800 a year, paid half-yearly; I will pay for the hunter you have just bargained for, and for another as good, if you can find him; and then I should imagine, with what is vulgarly termed the run of your own teeth, and those of your horses and servants at home, when you wish to be at home, you will not only have no cause for complaint, but be enabled to make as good an appearance, and enjoy yourself as much as any other young heir-apparent in this county, or the next.'

Here our hero nodded assent, and afterwards acknowledged the kindness of his father in common-place words, which it may not be worth while to repeat. But a bystander would have observed a something in his manner at the moment, which too plainly showed the final result of the conversation was by no means satisfactory. In fact, though scotched, the snake was not killed, and Frank said within himself, 'If I am not permitted to *breed* him, I am determined to *have* a race-horse, before I am much older.'

Now, as it has been my desire to draw a portrait of Frank Raby in his own true character—one which, on the whole, does honour to our nature—I must endeavour not only to account for, but to smooth down this too apparent disregard of the wishes of a kind and indulgent parent. The real truth, then, is this, startling as it may appear:—racing has been represented, and justly, in my opinion, to be a stimulus acting powerfully on the generous ambition of man, prompting him to personal exertion, and highly exciting to *superiority*. What, then, is the result? Why, that, as a man now and then violates his best principles for a woman, he now and then violates them for a horse. Such, it appears, had been the impression made on Frank Raby by his late intercourse with Lord Dauntley, who had been introduced to him by his friend

Goodall, by the well-conducted breeding establishment that he had formed, together with his temporary success—for he had just won the Oaks, and had run second for the St. Leger—that he had made a vow to himself, that, before he was three years older, he would win a Derby or an Oaks, if money or management could effect it.

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